

Cambian Wisbech School

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

Inspection dates

10–12 January 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Until recently, pupils have not made sufficient progress in academic subjects, especially those who are most able. Over time, too few pupils in Year 11 have gained nationally recognised (accredited) qualifications.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Some is good but expectations are not high enough for what pupils are capable of achieving in their written work.
- A few staff do not follow the school's agreed approaches to manage pupils' behaviour well enough.
- Pupils' attendance is improving rapidly but it is still too low.
- The school teaches the national curriculum. Schemes of work do not reflect the most recent version. This leaves gaps in what pupils need to know to be successful in gaining qualifications by the end of Year 11.
- Systems to check how well pupils are learning and the progress they are making are not linked to the current national curriculum.
- Staff are not accessing enough training to develop their teaching skills.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and deputy headteacher are effective, resilient leaders. Their leadership has already had a significant impact on improving behaviour, attendance, achievement and communication with parents. Staff, parents and most pupils hold them in high regard.
- Leaders and governors have created a culture of shared responsibility among staff to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding is robust and effective.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that all but one of the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The proprietor should ensure that particulars of the school's academic performance, during the preceding school year are published, including the results of any public examinations. (Part 6 32(3)e)

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' academic achievement and their success in gaining accredited qualifications by the end of key stage 4 by:
 - continuing to improve pupils' attendance
 - raising teachers' expectations for what pupils are capable of achieving in their written work
 - aligning schemes of work more closely with the national programmes of study in each subject
 - revising the school's assessment policy and checking what pupils already know and what they need to learn next in relation to the 2014 national curriculum
 - providing more training opportunities for staff to develop their teaching skills.
- Ensure that all staff follow the school's agreed strategies for managing pupils' behaviour.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor should ensure that particulars of the school's academic performance, during the preceding school year are published, including the results of any public examinations. (Part 6 32(3)e)

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and deputy are strong leaders. They communicate effectively their shared ambition for pupils to achieve well both academically and socially, through good-quality teaching and care. Leaders are moving the school forward determinedly with dedication. New approaches are showing discernible improvement in the short time they have been in post.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been pivotal in raising staff morale. 'I feel supported in my role', 'I now thoroughly enjoy my job' and 'leaders have made improvements' are examples of the wholly positive responses received in Ofsted's questionnaire. Leaders have gained staff's confidence and respect.
- Staff are responding well to leaders' high expectations and entirely on board to improve provision and raise pupils' achievement. They feel valued and are confident to raise any concerns they may have about pupils with leaders.
- Leaders ensure that staff's well-being is given appropriate consideration. For example, since their arrival, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have provided teaching staff with regular time for curriculum planning and ensure that all staff are covered to take a reasonable break from supervising pupils during the school day. Staff are supported well in catering for pupils' complex social, emotional, behavioural and mental health needs.
- Regular checks of teaching and learning enable leaders to identify what is working well and where weaknesses need to be addressed. The leadership team is particularly skilful in selecting the right priorities for improvement and in tackling them in the right order.
- Leaders have sensibly set challenging targets to improve attendance quickly so that pupils are able to make better progress. The agreed approaches, such as regular communication between home and school and rigorous checks of pupils' attendance are working well. A few pupils' attendance has risen from 50% to 100%. The drive for further improvement continues as, overall, attendance is still too low.
- Improvements in individual pupils' behaviour shows in the significant reduction of incidents resulting in the need for removal from lessons, physical restraint and exclusion. The new policy with a clear rewards and sanctions system has not been in place for long enough to ensure that it is fully embedded, with all staff implementing it consistently.
- Parents contacted by telephone commented that their children's behaviour has improved massively. They confirmed that the school has 'done wonders', that communication is 'brilliant' between home and school and that staff 'all do a good job and try their hardest' to support their children.
- The quality of the paperwork and record keeping is extremely good. This includes policies, staff and pupil confidential files, assessment and attendance information, behaviour and incident logs. A local authority representative commented that the school completes pupils' personal education plans for children looked after to a high standard.
- The school's internal evaluation of its work and its plans for improvement are comprehensive and thorough.
- Leaders provide staff with regular training and support in safeguarding, managing

behaviour and welfare arrangements. Staff have not yet received the same level of coaching and training to develop their teaching skills and subject leadership in order to promote consistently good teaching and better academic achievement.

- The headteacher has recently introduced a robust system to appraise staff's performance and provide them with clear targets for improvement.
- Leaders have introduced new systems for setting challenging learning and behaviour targets for pupils and accurately measuring their progress from their starting points towards them with regular checks. Expectations have been raised for pupils to make at least expected progress and wherever possible to gain qualifications.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The school does its best to enrich the curriculum with interesting activities to extend pupils' experiences and to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most of these are provided away from school, for example at a local farm. The greatest challenge is the building itself which does not provide sufficient space for practical approaches to learning that most of the pupils prefer, enjoy and engage with readily.

Governance

- Leaders benefit from strong, ambitious and challenging yet supportive governance. Lines of accountability are clear, with a well-organised approach to monitoring the school's performance through regular visits and reporting procedures. Weaknesses are addressed confidently and quickly. Governors ensure that leaders are supported suitably to meet the significant and complex needs of individual pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding is a priority and that everyone plays their part in keeping children safe.
- Risk assessment of each pupil is thorough and taken into account in planning their learning and support to ensure that their needs are met effectively.
- Guidance for staff written in the school's policies for behaviour, safety and safeguarding is explicit and useful in promoting consistency in approaches, which is improving steadily.
- Staff are confident in raising any concerns with the designated leads for safeguarding and effective systems are in place for recording and noting them carefully.
- All staff are trained regularly in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. This equips them with the up-to-date knowledge they need to detect pupils who are potentially vulnerable so that action to intervene can be taken quickly. They know the procedure for whistle-blowing and how to use it.
- Leaders ensure that action is taken swiftly to address any issues that arise and share relevant information with health and social care professionals where appropriate.
- Documentation is detailed and well organised, enabling referrals to external agencies to be made quickly and confidently.
- Statutory checks made on all staff, including agency staff, external providers and governors ensure their suitability to work with children.

- The safeguarding policy is updated regularly to reflect current guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and it is published on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because over time pupils have not made the progress they are capable of in academic subjects. Some staff's expectations are not high enough for what pupils are capable of achieving in their written work, especially those who are the most able.
- Teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils to work hard to complete the tasks they are set. They manage situations calmly when pupils opt out of the work that is planned for them but sometimes do not provide appropriate alternatives. In these circumstances pupils lose too much learning time.
- All teachers plan for pupils' learning diligently. Even so, the schemes of work they are following are out of date because they are not aligned to the current national curriculum that the school chooses to teach.
- Similarly, teachers assess pupils' progress against national curriculum levels that no longer exist and have been replaced by higher expectations for what pupils should know and understand by the end of each year. This means that when pupils begin courses in Year 10 they have gaps in what they need to know to be successful in gaining qualifications later on.
- Developing pupils' speaking and listening skills is a priority because most pupils' communication skills are limited on arrival due to the high levels of anxiety they experience. Teaching rightly allows time for discussion, debate and conversation. Teachers' talk is articulate and they encourage pupils to model it.
- Teachers use a variety of approaches to sustain pupils' engagement. In science and mathematics, and cookery, for example, they use visual and practical approaches that help pupils to gain understanding quickly. In key stage 2, pupils' interests and preferred ways of learning are capitalised upon fully and this motivates and inspires them to engage with learning.
- Teachers in English, mathematics, science, carpentry and art have good knowledge of the subjects that they teach. This enables them to adjust learning quickly when pupils lack understanding or when they identify gaps in their knowledge as a result of missing education for periods of time before joining the school.
- The quality of teachers' feedback, both oral and written, ensures that pupils are guided well in how to improve their work.
- Teachers ensure that parents receive regular reports on how well their children are doing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants promote equality of opportunity. All pupils are treated fairly and are valued. Staff work hard to cater for pupils' specific and complex needs.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders do not hesitate to take swift action when they are alerted to or identify any potential risks to individual pupils. Pupils say that bullying is rare and they know how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils confirmed that leaders' introduction of each pupil being allocated to a key worker has given them a designated adult, whom they trust and appreciate, to approach if they are feeling troubled or upset.
- Pupils all have social, emotional, behavioural, learning and mental health needs when they arrive at the school, which may be at any point during the school year, often with limited or no information about their previous education. Leaders and other staff make every effort to make their transition into school as positive as possible by assessing their needs diligently and tailoring the provision accordingly.
- The curriculum promotes their understanding of British values well. For example, pupils discussed and voted on Brexit to enhance their understanding of democracy. The content of the school's personal, social and health education programme covers relevant topics such as feelings, anti-bullying and the effects of smoking.
- Pupils receive good guidance on careers from school leaders and external sources. They undertake work experience. They are strongly encouraged to move on to courses in the local college wherever possible. An ex-pupil undertaking a college course confirmed that staff continue to offer help and guidance to assist success in completing the course.
- Staff know the pupils well and are willing to make adjustments to meet their complex needs. Pupils benefit from sensitive support and advice when they are troubled. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. This trust, and in turn respect for staff, increases the longer that pupils remain in the school.

Behaviour

- Pupils' behaviour, taking fully into account the complexity of their needs and levels of anxiety, is not yet good and requires improvement.
- Most, but not all, pupils respond positively to the new, straightforward behaviour policy. They understand the sanctions and rewards system that enables them to earn points towards extra activities such as go-kart racing.
- Some pupils show impressive resilience in getting on with their learning when others become disruptive. Incidents of disruption sometimes continue for too long; they are not diffused effectively because some staff lack confidence in applying the school's new behaviour policy.
- Attendance is improving significantly for some pupils. Pupils who, for example, have not been in a school for a year or more now attend regularly. The school's improved contact with parents is having a significant impact on improving the attendance of these pupils. Leaders continue to reach out to those parents whose children are not attending as

regularly as they should to encourage them to ensure that their children attend every day.

- Some staff are extremely skilful in managing challenging behaviour and de-escalating challenging situations. They remain calm when pupils are in crisis and demonstrate good skills in supporting them and diffusing the situation, enabling pupils to recover quickly. This good practice is not consistent and recovery time for some pupils is too long.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, too few pupils have gained recognised qualifications by the end of Year 11 and this has limited their choices in future education, training or employment.
- Last year, no pupils had been entered for any external examinations such as entry levels, GCSEs and vocational qualifications, until the deputy headteacher arrived and successfully made some last-minute entries. However, final results were poor and were not published as required to meet the standard in the independent school standards paragraph 32(3)e.
- Work in pupils' books across age ranges and subjects shows wide variation in the quality of presentation, level of challenge and the amount of work achieved over time. In some subjects, such as geography, some work is unfinished, undemanding and scruffy in presentation. In contrast, the youngest pupils' English and mathematics books show high levels of productivity and huge pride in completing work with care and attention to detail.
- Pupils make good progress in practical and vocational subjects such as woodwork, cookery and art, where good teaching encourages commitment and conscientiousness in completing tasks to a high standard. On the farm, pupils work well in a team, take responsibility and show determination and resilience to complete tasks.
- Leaders have raised expectations this year for pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science. The introduction, this school year, of a robust system to measure their progress against challenging targets for learning is making a difference.
- In mathematics and science the most able pupils in Year 10 and 11 are now achieving well because teaching ensures sufficient academic challenge alongside consistently high expectations for pupils to behave well.
- Current pupils are being prepared suitably for the next stage of their education, training and employment. They are supported well and encouraged to move on to college courses.
- Since September 2016, most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have made progress that is in line with that expected of pupils nationally and some are exceeding it.

School details

Unique reference number	134179
DfE registration number	873/6033
Inspection number	10006014

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	9 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Chair	Ann-Marie Carrie
Headteacher	Duncan Fielding
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000
Telephone number	01945 427276
Website	www.cambiangroup.com
Email address	duncan.fielding@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2012

Information about this school

- This is an independent day school for up to 40 girls and boys aged 9 to 17 who have social, emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties. The school is a member of the Cambian Group, which provides a wide range of services for children nationally.
- The school is situated in a listed building in the centre of Wisbech town. Vocational studies such as construction and carpentry, opportunities to engage in farm work and physical education are provided off site locally. Some pupils attend the local college on specific days.
- There are currently 19 pupils on roll.

- Pupils are placed by local authorities across the country. Almost all pupils have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. Some live in a children's home.
- All pupils are unable to attend mainstream education and have missed significant periods of education prior to joining the school. The proportion of pupils who arrive or leave part way through the school year is high. Most pupils travel long distances by taxi to get to school and back each day.
- The school aims to re-engage pupils with their learning in a safe and caring environment where their feelings of failure and frustration are replaced with a sense of belonging and success.
- Since the previous inspection, turnover at leadership level has been high. The current headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post for two terms.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, pupils and the school's director of education, who is also a governor. A sample of parents, an ex-pupil and a representative from a placing authority were contacted by telephone. Eight staff returned Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the results were analysed. No parents responded to Parent View.
- Teaching and learning for all age groups were observed across a range of academic subjects and vocational studies, sometimes with the headteacher. The inspector reviewed work in pupils' books across a range of subjects and the school's most recent information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance.
- The inspector looked at a range of the school's documentation, including policies, schemes of work and record keeping for safeguarding, behaviour and safety. Electronic versions of the school's admissions register and attendance information were seen. The single central record of statutory suitability vetting carried out on all staff, including agency staff, external providers and governors, was checked.
- The school's information about how well it is performing and its plans for future improvements was evaluated. Anonymised copies of documents about staff's performance were seen.

Inspection team

Linda Killman, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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