

Cambian Home Tree School

72 March Road, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 0LP

Inspection dates

7–9 June 2016

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
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new leadership team has a strong, purposeful vision for this new school that is reflected in pupils' good social and academic development.
- The governing body provides good support to the growing leadership team. Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Due to the short duration of many pupils' stay at the school, the range of courses offered is wide and constantly changing. Skilful staff rapidly adapt their teaching and planning to meet the requirements of the different examination courses that pupils are studying.
- As a result of good teaching over time, pupils leave the school with a range of appropriate qualifications. This prepares them well for their next steps in education, training or employment.
- Transitions into and out of school are well planned to ensure that pupils' needs are quickly met. These arrangements give pupils the best opportunity to progress as fast as they can.
- A well-trained and capable staff team provides a varied, personalised and effectively planned curriculum. This meets the wide-ranging and often complex needs of pupils.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff know the pupils well and support them to make sure that they know right from wrong and to consider the feelings of others.
- Pupils develop increasing levels of independence and self-management in their everyday lives. Staff routinely review and support their progress very effectively. As a result, pupils develop the skills to manage their own behaviour.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils who are taught through therapeutic intervention and at the Cambian Willows site do not make the same rapid progress as those at the main school because leaders do not monitor and improve the quality of provision with the same rigour.
- Pupils who are taught at the Cambian Willows site place less value on education and attend less well.

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?

- Monitor the progress made by pupils who attend Cambian Willows and those taught through therapeutic intervention so that they make the same rapid progress as others and attain well.
- Improve the learning environment at Cambian Willows so that it is a positive place for young people to learn and so that pupils have access to the same high-quality resources that they have at the main site.
- Support staff responsible for pupils' out-of-school care to ensure that pupils get to school on time and learn well.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and governors have a strong, purposeful vision for this new school. This is reflected in the way staff determinedly approach pupils' social and academic development. At the Home Tree School site, leaders have been very successful in creating a positive environment in which pupils learn and develop skills for independence. Caring and thoughtful staff are ambitious for their pupils. The school meets all the independent school standards.
- Highly motivated and committed subject leaders have good specialist knowledge which they share effectively with other teaching and support staff. All are determined to provide pupils with the best learning opportunities. Detailed subject policies reflect the ethos and vision of the school and inform the schemes of learning that underpin teaching. This enables teachers to plan for pupils' learning in detail, ensuring that their individual needs are mostly well met. As a result, most pupils make the best of their time at the school and make increasingly rapid progress.
- The varied, personalised and well-planned curriculum meets the wide-ranging and often complex needs of pupils. Strong personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education places a focus on self-help and management skills. This means that, over time, pupils become more independent and are able to manage better their anxieties about learning. Through this curriculum, pupils have access to an appropriate range of qualifications.
- The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to take part in art, music and, through visits to local sports facilities, a range of sports. Pupils value the opportunities to increase their skills in independent living, such as cooking, shopping and independent travel, because they are well supported to manage some very anxious behaviours. As a result, pupils are better prepared for life beyond education. This work contributes well to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development as well as to their academic development.
- The school operates according to generic policies which have been centrally devised by the proprietor. In some respects, these policies are too general and the school's actual practices and procedures go well beyond policy requirements. For example, the behaviour policy does not detail the effective practice used to manage pupils' challenging behaviours or the use of behaviour records to inform future planning for pupils. New staff reading the policies would not be well informed about the often excellent practice taking place in the school.
- Leaders' and governors' checks on the quality of teaching and learning taking place at the Home Tree School site are accurate and based on broad and reliable evidence, including information on pupils' progress. However, monitoring of the work of the therapeutic intervention team is not rigorous and leaders do not have a detailed understanding of how well the pupils attending these sessions are doing.
- Information gained through leaders' monitoring of teaching enables them to identify the training needs of staff and to ensure that staff meetings improve the quality of provision. As a result, staff are well equipped to support the pupils they teach and this ensures that outcomes are high.
- Leaders successfully recognise and include pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, challenging topics relevant to pupils are debated in small, supportive groups. As a result, pupils respect one another's differences and needs and are sometimes able to offer appropriate peer support to their friends.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the school is developing rapidly. Governors are well informed about the impact of the school's work. They have an accurate understanding of most pupils' progress, and check for themselves the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' learning and personal development.
 - While they hold the headteacher and other leaders to account for the quality of provision and pupils' progress at the Home Tree School site, they are less able to do this when pupils attend the Cambian Willows site or sessions with the therapeutic team.
 - The chair of the governing body has relevant expertise and leads the governing body effectively. Governors are developing effective quality assurance structures and systems to hold senior leaders and staff to account for the progress of pupils. They undertake visits to the school in order to gain a first-hand understanding of the impact of the work of leaders and staff.
 - Governors know how well different groups of pupils are progressing. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching team and the impact of the use of different funding streams. They hold regular meetings with the headteacher and develop their knowledge through scrutiny of reports

and information provided by senior staff.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders and governors are taking action to ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep pupils safe. They have attended relevant safeguarding training and know what to do if they have concerns about a young person's welfare. As a result, pupils are safe.
- Governors support leaders to ensure that, where difficulties are identified arising from the high needs of pupils, staff receive training so that they can appropriately manage behaviour. Concerns about the well-being of pupils are well managed and referrals made to the designated safeguarding lead are dealt with effectively. Referrals are made promptly to in-house therapeutic teams or to external agencies. As a result, pupils get the help they need quickly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Most pupils make at least good progress from their different starting points because teachers are well equipped to meet their individual needs.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, but is also adaptable to provide for pupils who may be attending the school for a short period of time while remaining on roll at their placing authority school. Pupils often arrive part way through a specific course, and skilful staff rapidly adapt their teaching and planning accordingly to include the requirements of the particular examination specification. This is a strength of the teaching team as it means that pupils can move back to their placing school smoothly, having missed as little of the course of study as possible.
- Pupils value the efforts made by staff. One pupil shared with inspectors the view that staff had willingly found out all they could to support her in continuing with her A-level course, even though no teacher was a subject specialist. As a result of significant levels of staff commitment, pupils are able to continue with subjects that interest them.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their comments about the quality of the school's work. They say that the structure of the school day offers pupils the opportunity to be taught the same curriculum as in any school and that the quality of education they receive is good. One parent told inspectors that she was 'in awe' of teaching staff who she felt had been 'incredibly accommodating' yet 'focused on achieving great outcomes' for her child. This was reinforced by a number of parents spoken to, many of whom said that they had not expected their child to engage so well with education.
- Teachers' detailed planning is well informed by their continual focus on the specific needs of their pupils. Pupils have individual targets which challenge them in each curriculum subject as well as in the broader aspects of personalised learning, such as independence and self-management of behaviour. Many of these skills are taught by a well-trained and experienced therapeutic team that has a clear understanding of the needs of their pupils.
- Pupils are keen to meet the high expectations of staff and work hard to gain their praise. Pupils say that they also value aspects of reward and praise for their behaviour, which include the 'stars' displayed in the reception area. Pupils say staff take the time to write on the stars celebrating something they have done which is 'extra special'. These positive actions contribute to standards that are high and improving.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and other staff work seamlessly to support pupils at each point of transition in the day; pupils say this helps them to be ready to start their learning in the next session. Pupils have excellent relationships with staff and place their trust in them. These productive relationships allow staff to increase the challenge offered by activities in lessons and in the wider aspects of school life. This enables pupils to make good progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- As a result of good teaching over time, the pupils who stay at the school longest do particularly well, with some gaining appropriate qualifications, including GCSEs and A levels. The teaching of practical subjects is particularly effective. For example, pupils achieve well in food technology and art.
- Leaders and teachers have carried out a lot of work to improve the accuracy of the school's assessment information. This now includes progress measures for all aspects of pupils' development. As a result, leaders now know how well pupils are achieving in most aspects of the curriculum and use this information to ensure that they are challenged to learn quickly as well as to set aspirational termly targets.
- Links with another school, owned by the proprietor, are giving some teachers the opportunity to check the accuracy of their assessments, particularly in mathematics. However, this cross-moderation is not yet happening for all subjects and not all staff are fully confident in the judgements they are making.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils' views are sought by leaders and other adults on a frequent basis. Pupils are encouraged to speak out and put their point of view forward. They have ample opportunity to raise and share concerns. They make appropriate use of the high-quality independent advocacy service which is available to them on a weekly basis.
- Leaders take prompt and effective action when they identify any risks to the welfare of pupils. They take great care of pupils who can, at times, be a risk to themselves, ensuring that they have the appropriate care they need to overcome significant emotional and mental health challenges. Pupils say that bullying incidents are rare. They trust adults to support them well should any bullying take place and know they have staff to talk to and that their opinions matter. One child shared with the lead inspector her view that 'they listen, as a child in the system people always say that they listen but then do what they want anyway and ignore what you say, but here they really listen'. This trusting relationship means that pupils are well cared for and their safety is well managed.
- Pupils' admission to the school is almost always outside of normal transition points and pupils often stay for only a short time. Leaders and staff determinedly manage transitions to make them as positive as possible. For example, at the Cambian Willows site, pupils receive classroom teaching alongside the much-needed therapeutic support. This joint approach of therapy and learning is beginning to enable young people to access full-time education at the main site of the school. Where this has worked well, attendance has risen rapidly and pupils are rightly proud of their progress.
- The school makes a very effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils say that staff support them well to make sure that they consider the feelings of others when they are finding things difficult. Pupils know and are reminded about the school's expectations of them and are well supported to understand the difference between right and wrong. The curriculum strongly reflects British values; staff and pupils are willing to challenge the opinions and behaviour of their peers when they do not reflect these and pupils are encouraged to debate issues with staff and their friends in a respectful and well-informed manner. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The adults who support pupils in all aspects of their learning are aware of pupils' specific needs and their hopes for life beyond school. As a result, pupils benefit from experiences which are well matched to their interests and aspirations. The learning environment on the Home Tree School site reflects the expectations set by staff and demonstrates the value placed on pupils' achievement and wider development. However, at Cambrian Willows, the learning environment is not as positive or reflective of pupils' needs. Pupils on this site say that they would like their classroom to look as good as the classrooms on the Home Tree School site.
- Risk-assessments are carried out to ensure that pupils get the best opportunity to work independently while ensuring that they have the necessary support to manage this effectively. As a result, pupils become responsible learners and understand the risks of working with equipment such as knives.
- The support pupils receive in all aspects of their development is excellent. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Anxious pupils are willing to place their trust in staff to help them make decisions which are in their best interests and to take those decisions for them when they are not able to. As a result, pupils are kept safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils, including those who attend the satellite provision at Cambian Willows, is good, particularly when the high level of needs and anxiety experienced by some pupils are taken into account.
- The behaviour of pupils is good in lessons. Pupils are almost always polite and respectful of adults and other pupils. They take time to listen to the opinions of others, taking into account how their response may make others feel. As a result, pupils feel valued by staff and their peers and more willingly take part in open discussion to offer support to one another.
- The majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning and thoroughly enjoy their work. However, attendance is variable. While the school does all it can to ensure that pupils are encouraged to attend, wider services do not place the same high value on education. Consequently, some pupils do not get to school on time and cannot make the best of the learning opportunities they are offered.

- The management of challenging behaviour is calm. Staff record incidents of poor behaviour accurately and use this to inform detailed and up-to-date risk assessment. This is also used to support staff in developing a well-planned approach to managing difficulties. Well-trained staff use this information effectively to plan and risk-assess difficult situations. As a result, pupils are given the best opportunity to develop self-control, but are supported well when they are in a time of crisis.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils join the school with mixed experiences of education. Many have not attended school for some time because of their anxieties or because of the difficulties previous schools have had in finding placements for them. The school sets targets for each pupil which are appropriately challenging. Overall, pupils make good progress in achieving these. They develop skills and acquire knowledge in reading, writing, communication and mathematics.
- Evidence in pupils' files and books, and on display around the school, shows that pupils in all year groups make good progress in a range of different subjects, including art, history, music and physical education. All groups of pupils make similar rates of progress.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that all groups of pupils make good progress, including disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of pupils making the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics, based on their various starting points, compares favourably to that of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who are identified by the school as being the most able make good and sometimes even more rapid progress. They are well supported by the curriculum and the increased challenge they are offered through the improved quality of teaching. As a result, these pupils achieve well.
- Pupils in key stages 4 and sixth form learners complete accredited courses or training programmes. These include entry-level, GCSEs and A levels. This helps them to be well prepared for the next step in their education, training or employment.
- Staff work hard to ensure that pupils leave the school well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training, with a strong focus on the specific needs of children looked after. However, while the transition from school is well considered and staff do all they can to ensure that pupils are well catered for, there are times when their progress is out of the control of staff. For example, when pupils reach the age of 18, they have to leave because their place is no longer funded by children's health services. This frustrates staff, particularly when individuals would benefit from further support to enable them to make a successful transition to independent living and further study or employment.

Sixth form provision

is good

- Learners show a positive attitude to their learning. They willingly apply themselves to their work. They are encouraged to take part in complex discussions about everyday issues. This is a challenge for many of the learners due to high levels of anxiety they experience, but within the safe environment of the school they are seen to develop this skill.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations of all learners in all aspects of their work. Study programmes are personalised to enable them to be well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training. Teachers willingly adjust their teaching to meet the expectations of examination specifications and the changing needs of the learners.
- Teachers and learners have strong relationships built on trust and respect which are equally shared. As a result, learners are happy to ask questions if they do not understand what they are supposed to do. The qualifications learners achieve are individually planned for. As a result of the teaching, care and attention they receive, learners are well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	141879
Inspection number	10018105
DfE registration number	873/6052
Type of school	Special
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	10
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Anne Marie Carrie
Chair	Chris strong
Headteacher	Kicha Mitchell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,000–£55,000
Telephone number	01945 660988
Website	www.cambianguroup.com
Email address	Info@cambianguroup.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Home Tree School is a part of the Cambian Education group. It is an independent special day school for up to 20 boys and girls aged 12 to 18 years who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Many pupils also have additional complex needs.
- Many pupils live in the Meeko House, a children’s home operated by the proprietor on the same site as the school. Others attend Cambian Willows, a Tier-4 assessment and treatment in-patient service for children and young people between the ages of 12 and 18 who are experiencing mental health difficulties. Meeko House was inspected separately and the outcomes do not form part of this report.
- The school is located in a listed building on the edge of the Cambridgeshire fenland village of Friday Bridge, near Wisbech. Post-16 provision is also on this main school site.
- The school's aims include providing pupils with opportunities to re-engage in full-time education, and preparing them to live and work independently. Initially, the headteacher of this school also ran the company’s existing school, Cambian Wisbech School (URN 134179, DfE number 873/6033). However, governors changed this in September last year and the school now has its own headteacher and leadership team. The leadership teams of both schools work closely together.
- There are 20 pupils on roll. Four pupils have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. Pupils are placed by local authorities across the country.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the senior teacher and other representatives from the leadership team.
- Meetings were held with members of the teaching staff, a range of pupils and governors.
- Inspectors observed pupils in classrooms and as they moved around the school. They met with a number of pupils in small groups or individually.
- Pupils' work was reviewed. Recent progress information was discussed and safeguarding documentation and other records were scrutinised.
- Inspectors also reviewed responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, which collects parents' views about the school's work. They also took into account information shared by parents through telephone conversations.
- An inspector visited the satellite provision at Cambian Willows.

Inspection team

Mary Rayner, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Heptinstall

Ofsted Inspector

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