

Inspection of Cambian Potterspury Lodge School

Potterspury Lodge, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 7LL

Inspection dates: 25–27 February 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils achieve well. Staff help pupils to be self-confident in their academic learning and personal development. Pupils are positive, polite and articulate. They usually behave well in lessons and around the school. Staff support well those who find behaviour more difficult. Staff have a good understanding of pupils' complex needs.

Pupils say bullying is rare. Most say pupils get on well together and they feel safe. They value the pupils' support office they can visit or the use of the 'grumble form' to share any worries or concerns they may have. Pupils say: 'If you feel anxious, there is always someone you can talk to.'

Pupils learn the importance of respecting others. They say: 'It's a British value, a human right. Everyone deserves to be treated as an individual.' Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Inspectors saw pupils enjoying social time, playing table tennis with staff.

Teachers plan lessons relevant to the aptitudes and needs of the pupils. Pupils want to achieve well. Staff encourage pupils to have high aspirations. They help them gain the skills and qualifications they need when they leave the school. Staff expect all pupils to do well, although some pupils said they would like to have more challenge.

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

Leaders and other staff are determined all pupils will succeed. Leaders' sharp focus and careful planning have brought about rapid improvements. Staff, pupils and parents commented on improvements to the curriculum, behaviour and other aspects of the school's work. Staff have the same vision of what they want the curriculum to achieve. They want to prepare pupils as well as possible for their lives beyond the school and they provide a 'pathway to adulthood'.

Pupils across all year groups study a broad range of subjects. Mathematics is taught well. Pupils revisit their learning to help them remember things. Pupils achieve well in English and many write well. Sometimes, staff do not expect pupils to write in different subjects. In reading, staff develop pupils' inference and empathy skills. For example, pupils study the book 'Touching the Void' and talk about supporting others and making difficult decisions. Pupils usually have positive attitudes to reading and know why it is important. Staff could do more to encourage pupils to read more often.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They give clear explanations which help pupils understand. They question pupils skilfully to check their understanding and encourage them to share their ideas.

Leaders make sure staff are provided with a wide range of training to meet pupils' needs. Pupils' education, health and care plans identify the things pupils need to

work on. This includes how pupils will develop the social, emotional and life skills they need. Some pupils told us how staff had supported them to overcome their anxiety about travelling to different places. As a result, they now have the confidence to attend work experience placements. Pupils learn valuable life skills in food technology. These include costing recipes, food hygiene, safety and practical skills.

Leaders are reviewing what pupils learn in different subjects. They know further work is needed to ensure that all subjects are planned and taught equally well. On occasion, staff do not have high enough expectations of pupils in some subjects.

Staff encourage pupils to have high aspirations. Pupils have individual career plans. Some pupils and sixth-form students visit local colleges and universities to find out about or enrol on courses offered. In the sixth form, staff plan carefully the steps to help students move to life beyond the school. Staff organise people from local businesses to come into the school. Pupils value this support. They say: 'One of the beauties of this place is that if you want to do a qualification, you can do it and they will support you towards it. They try to build your work ethic.' In recent years, pupils have gained a mixture of GCSE and vocational awards. Pupils go on to further education, employment or training.

Staff teach pupils to respect those who have different backgrounds, cultures or beliefs to themselves. In English, pupils learned about different forms of discrimination. In citizenship, pupils watched a video of 'Question Time' and learned about the rule of law. Pupils are prepared well to become citizens in modern Britain.

Staff apply well the school's agreed behaviour policy. Pupils know what is expected and are rewarded for good behaviour. The morning and afternoon staff meetings enable staff to share important information. Parents value the weekly communications from form tutors.

Senior leaders are mindful about staff workload. Staff morale is positive. Staff are proud of the work they do for the pupils.

The proprietorial board knows what the school does well and what it should do to improve further. It checks the school meets its statutory responsibilities. The proprietorial board and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school site meets the premises requirements. The buildings are well kept. Classrooms are appropriate places to learn. The fire safety requirements are met. Staff write specific risk assessments for on- and off-site activities, including school trips.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure all staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff receive regular and up-to-date training. This includes how to keep pupils safe, including in relation to county lines, the 'Prevent' duty and cyber bullying.

Staff know how to report concerns about pupils' welfare. Leaders follow up concerns carefully. They follow the school's policies and take appropriate and prompt actions. They work closely with external agencies when this is relevant.

Leaders complete and record carefully the checks they make of the suitability of new staff to work with children.

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

- Leaders have made sure most subjects, including English and mathematics, are planned well. These plans show how pupils build their knowledge and skills over time. However, some subjects are less well developed. The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently coherently planned and sequenced in some subjects. However, it is clear from the actions they have already taken to plan next year's curriculum and to train staff in how to deliver it that leaders are in the process of bringing this about. For this reason, the transition arrangement has been applied in this case.
- Some staff do not expect enough of pupils. On occasions, pupils are capable of achieving more independently. Leaders should ensure that all staff are ambitious for pupils of all abilities and aptitudes to achieve in all subjects.
- Opportunities for pupils to complete written work to develop communication skills are lacking in some subjects. Some pupils are not as confident as they could be when writing independently. Leaders should ensure that pupils can apply their English writing skills across the curriculum.
- Staff do not encourage pupils, particularly those who are less confident or more reluctant readers, to read independently and regularly. As a result, some pupils are not as confident or as fluent readers as they could be. Leaders should ensure that pupils grow in confidence as readers, so that they practise and enjoy reading more.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	122136
DfE registration number	928/6039
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10116631
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Education
Chair	Mark Bowes
Principal	Jennifer Nimmo
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,223 to £67,777
Telephone number	01908 542 912
Website	www.cambiangroup.com
Email address	education@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2019

Information about this school

- Cambian Potterspurty Lodge is an independent residential special school. The proprietor of the school is Cambian Education.
- The school caters for pupils who have autism spectrum disorder. Many also have a range of behavioural, social, emotional and mental-health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

- The new principal was appointed in November 2019. A new head of education for the school was appointed in January 2020.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school's previous full inspection was on 13–15 March 2018. A monitoring inspection took place on 6 February 2019.

Information about this inspection

We 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.

- We met with the principal, senior and middle leaders, and members of the board of proprietors, including the regional director of education.
- We looked closely at English, including reading, mathematics, food technology and personal, social and health education to evaluate the quality of education. As far as possible, we met with lead members of staff for each subject, visited lessons, looked at pupils' workbooks and met with staff and some pupils who were involved in the lessons we visited.
- We met with other staff and pupils both formally and informally.
- Throughout the inspection, I met with the safeguarding leaders to discuss safeguarding. We evaluated safeguarding records and processes, including those relating to exclusions, behaviour and complaints. I also considered documentation relating to checks made on new staff.
- I had a tour of the school buildings and site to check the school's compliance with Part 5 of the independent school standards.
- We took account of the 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and the 13 free-text responses. We also took account of the 33 responses to the staff survey and 18 responses to the pupils' survey.
- At the same time as the school inspection, an inspection of the school's residential provision took place. The findings from this inspection are reported separately.

Inspection team

John Lawson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Young

Ofsted Inspector

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