

Inspection of Cambian Spring Hill

Palace Road, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 3HN

Inspection dates: 19–21 October 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are usually calm and happy when they arrive at school, despite the early start many have in order to reach school on time. Staff greet pupils warmly, showing an interest in both their journey and their feelings. Pupils feel valued and understood, comments such as 'staff here know me well and when I don't feel like talking, they understand' show how well staff and pupils get on.

All the staff in school want pupils to do the very best they can. Pupils know this and work hard even when it is tough. For example, because of their additional needs, pupils do not always enjoy writing. Despite this, pupils work hard in English and last year pupils' English results were the best ever.

Pupils nearly always behave well. This is often because staff understand when a situation is likely to upset a pupil. Adults work with pupils to help them to stay calm and to manage their feelings. Pupils told the inspectors there was very little bullying in and around school. School records confirm that few pupils are bullied.

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

All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The majority have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. School leaders believe that this should not prevent pupils from achieving as much as possible during their time in school. The curriculum has been carefully created and sequenced with this aim in mind. The very broad range of subjects taught make sure the needs of all pupils are met. For example, some post-16 students study horticulture and learn a range of skills, including woodwork. Others study A-level mathematics and learn how to programme board games on the computer.

The curriculum is well planned and delivered in the majority of subjects. This includes mathematics and English. Across different subjects, staff plan activities that build on pupils' previous knowledge. But science is not always as clearly planned, particularly for younger pupils.

Most pupils are competent and confident readers. Few read for pleasure, however. Most prefer non-fiction texts to reading a novel, for example. The school gives each pupil two books a year for personal reading. This year each pupil had to write a book review on their gifted book. A prize offered for the best increased the number and quality of finished reviews. The number of pupils reading the books also increased. Pupils told inspectors that the school library books needed to be more interesting.

Pupils behave well. Disruption to learning is rare. Staff deliver the curriculum well because they have good subject knowledge. They also receive training from the clinical team in how to support pupils with autism spectrum disorder in the classroom. This training helps staff to make sure that the curriculum is finely tuned to meet individual needs of pupils

Teachers and teaching assistants check pupils' understanding frequently. If a pupil is struggling, they often rephrase questions or take a step back to let pupils think for themselves. They do not give pupils the answer. 'We always have to think hard until we get to the answer', pupils told inspectors. This is a school-wide approach designed to help pupils become independent.

Pupils' personal development is pivotal to their education. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities to develop pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Staff run a wide range of clubs and activities each lunchtime. For example, on Thursdays pupils can enjoy, trampolining, forest school, football and board games. On other days other activities are offered.

Past activities have included trips to a mosque, museums and outdoor pursuits centres, horse riding and challenges linked to the Prince's Trust award scheme. Trips have also not been confined to the UK, or planned by staff. After a history lesson about the Second World War, four pupils wrote to the principal. They asked whether they could visit the battle grounds in Belgium to bring history to life. The principal was impressed by their request. Particularly as this was the first trip away from their families for some of the pupils. All four pupils made the trip to Belgium. Work on display shows how much the pupils enjoyed the trip and the confidence they gained from visiting another country.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum helps pupils learn how to recognise inappropriate behaviour in others. They also learn the impact of their own behaviour on others. This includes age-appropriate discussions on issues including healthy relationships and sexual consent.

An independent careers adviser visits the school weekly. He is knowledgeable and understands the needs of pupils well. Working closely with staff and parents, he guides and directs pupils, including post-16 students, to make informed career choices.

The new managing director of children's services provides suitable support and challenge to the school's leaders, directly and through educational managers assigned to a group of schools. While the independent school standards are all met, some policies produced centrally do not meet the requirements. The principal knows this and has put in place policies which are pertinent to the school.

Leaders also ensure the school's accessibility plan meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The principal and other leaders know their pupils well. They seek to remove any barriers which hinder pupils' success. Leaders are rightly proud of the introductions of A levels to the post-16 curriculum. They are equally passionate about the forest school, art and music provision.

Leaders check the impact of their work carefully. They identify strengths and weaknesses and set effective targets for improvement. Staff are very positive about how leaders support them. They say they feel valued and skilled at their jobs.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding policy is on the company's website and makes reference to the latest government guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education 2021'. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for the school regularly delivers training to staff.

All staff attend safeguarding training and are clear about what to do if a child is in need. Safeguarding records show that the DSL identifies pupils in need of help and works closely with outside agencies to secure the relevant support.

Records are securely kept and chronologically ordered.

Checks on the single central record are diligently kept, which ensures staff are recruited safely. Through the PSHE programme, pupils learn the importance of keeping safe sexually and the importance of consent in relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- The curriculum overall is well planned and sequenced and is designed to meet the needs of pupils who attend the school. Work in books and discussions with pupils show that they learn and remember much of what is taught in line with their level of need. However, science is not as well organised as some other areas of the curriculum. Primary pupils' books do not always show a well sequenced approach, and this hinders pupils from using their previous knowledge to build new knowledge. Secondary science is more effectively sequenced and work in books reflects this. A more co-ordinated approach to planning the science curriculum for primary and secondary pupils would ensure a more consistently sequenced curriculum which would benefit both primary and secondary pupils.
- The proprietors have several different aspects to their business. They have attempted to produce corporate policies which cover both the care and educational aspects of the organisation. Unfortunately, these policies do not meet the independent school standards for either the safeguarding or the complaints policy. The school's senior leaders are aware of this and have produced their own school safeguarding and complaints policies. These meet the requirements of the independent school standards. Both sets of policies are displayed on the company's website. This can, and has, led to confusion in the past when parents have made complaints, and these have been directed to the wrong person. This issue was raised during the inspection with the managing director of children's services for the company. A subsequent email has been received which describes how the situation will be improved in the future. However, urgent action needs to be taken now by the company to ensure that only one set of advice and guidance for parents is displayed on the website and that the guidance meets the requirements of the independent school standards.

- Overall, pupils who attend the school are competent readers. However, few choose to read for pleasure. When asked, pupils suggested they would like to read more but felt the school library books were not interesting to them. Currently the school library has a small selection of books displayed in an uninteresting fashion. An improvement in the quality and quantity of books available is needed in order to start to engage pupils with reading for pleasure.

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.

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	142911
DfE registration number	815/6034
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10202196
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Autism Service
Chair	Andrew Sutherland
Headteacher	Samantha Campbell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£76,000
Telephone number	01765 603320
Website	https://www.cambiagroup.com/specialist-education/our-schools/autism-schools/spring-hill-school/
Email address	springhillschool@cambiagroup.com
Date of previous inspection	26–28 June 2017

Information about this school

- The school's last full inspection took place in June 2017. The school received an emergency inspection in May 2019.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.
- The school caters for the needs of pupils who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Some pupils have additional needs, including social, emotional and mental health needs, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- Cambian Spring Hill is an independent residential special school and is situated in extensive grounds on the outskirts of Ripon, North Yorkshire. It is registered for up to 50 pupils (boys and girls) aged between eight and 19 years. There are too few students in the sixth form to report separately on the post-16 provision.
- The school is operating within its registration agreed with the Department for Education.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- The inspection team met with the principal, the head of school and the assistant principal, who is currently the designated safeguarding lead for the school. The inspector also met with the school's regional manager.
- A telephone discussion was also conducted with the newly appointed managing director of children's services.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, English (including reading), science and PSHE. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited learning in art, forest school, horticulture and information technology, and checked curriculum plans and spoke to leaders in some of these areas.
- The inspection team checked health and safety documents; documents relating to the school's fire evacuation policy; first aid boxes, to check the contents; and staff certificates of attendance on first aid courses.
- A tour of the building was carried out to check the school's compliance with part 5 of the independent school standards.

- The lead inspector met with the DSL to check on the quality of systems used to record safeguarding incidents. Further discussion focused on the frequency and content of staff training, as well as the school's role in multidisciplinary safeguarding meetings.
- Discussions were also held with staff to check their safeguarding knowledge and the frequency of training.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Garry Stout	Ofsted Inspector

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