



Cambian Whinfell School

Specialist Education Services for Autism and Complex Needs

- Male • 7 - 19 years • Up to 52 Weeks
- Day and Residential Placements

Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about Cambian Whinfell School. I understand that the decision to choose specialist education and residential care for your son will have been reached with a great deal of thought and soul searching.

At Whinfell our first priority is to make our students feel safe, happy and secure in their new environment. We work hard to create a calm, therapeutic environment which feels as much like home as it is possible to be. With your son settled into the Whinfell family he will engage fully in education and the other myriad of experiences that we can offer. Working with him – and with you – we will make positive changes.

We deliver the full national curriculum to our students, and in a supported, caring way we challenge them to be the best they can possibly be.

We individualise timetables and our students study at levels appropriate to their needs. We offer GCSE's, Functional Skills and Entry Level Certificates. Our students continue studying Post 16 with A levels or BTEC Awards. They can do this either with us or at local colleges, including Kendal College, with whom we have excellent relations.

We aspire for all of our students to be able to live independent or semi-independent lives in the community once they leave us. Academic qualifications are important so that our leavers can successfully enter employment or higher education when they do eventually leave us, but equally crucial is the development of independence, self-esteem, social and communication skills. We do this by supporting all our boys to access work experience, by fostering links with other schools and by getting involved with community events.

Older boys can make a natural progression to full independence through graduating to our 'independence house' where they are supported to take full responsibility for their own daily living.

Under-pinning all of this is the multi-disciplinary nature of the school. All staff are trained in working with young people on the autistic spectrum and their individual needs and strategies are identified by a team of psychologists, occupational therapist and speech and language therapist.

We are a 10 minute walk from the centre of Kendal but we are also on the edge of the Lake District. The boys are therefore never isolated from the community but also benefit from all of the advantages the Lakes have to offer. All boys have a weekly Therapeutic Outdoor Learning session which can be anything from canoeing to rock-climbing, caving to mountain-biking and in their spare time they access local clubs and do activities such as sailing on Lake Windermere.

I hope this prospectus gives you a good insight into the outstanding standard of education and care we provide for students with traits or diagnosis of Autism. I am immensely proud of the young people and the staff that we have. I think we are a unique provision and would encourage parents (through local authorities) to visit our school and see first hand what we can offer.

If we can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact us. I look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Paddy Sandham

Principal

110 Windermere
Road,
Kendal
LA9 5EZ

Phone:
01539 723322.

Student Profile



Cambian has a heritage of delivering 'Outstanding' education and care for students with autism and other complex needs.

"Cambian Whinfell School places no limit on what pupils can achieve. The school has the highest expectations for pupils. Pupils do all they can to rise to the challenge. They learn with success because the school knows their individual needs so well. Staff expertly support pupils to feel able to 'have a go', take risks and believe in themselves".

Ofsted Education Report, 2025

Cambian Whinfell School is a 52-week and day education service that offers 'Outstanding' education and care for boys and young men aged 7-19. All our young people are on the autistic spectrum and often have a range of complex behaviours and additional diagnoses.

Our young people have often experienced significant disruption to their schooling and frequently arrive after multiple placement breakdowns. They may also present a risk to themselves or others due to high levels of challenging behaviour or deficits in personal development. Typically they are very disengaged, isolated and have little self-belief. By prioritising these deficits we create the conditions for them to re-engage in education and achieve their full potential.

We offer a highly therapeutic environment and seek to understand the reasons for each young person's behaviour. The environment is supportive yet challenging. The school prides itself on the range of specialist support services within the multidisciplinary team who play a fundamental part in planning and implementing the learning experiences of our young people. We have an Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist, Educational Psychologist and Clinical Psychologist on our staff team. We aim to draw out the potential in each young person and work alongside them to discover and nurture their strengths.

Typical Student Profile

- Male, Ages 7-19yrs
- Traits or diagnosis of autism and associated conditions including ADHD and PDA
- May have mild to moderate learning difficulties
- Specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia
- Complex needs and associated challenging behaviour
- Often multiple exclusions and placement breakdowns
- A history of school refusal, periods of time out of school and may have experienced previous admission to a CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) inpatient unit
- Issued with an Education, Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs

Our Approach



The environment is structured, stable and secure with well-planned routines aimed at reducing anxiety and confusion.

Cambian Whinfell School

Our aspiration is for all of our young people to be equipped with the skills to fulfil their potential and be able to live happy, independent, or semi-independent lives in the community.

Cambian Whinfell School provide individual care and education to the highest standard. Our aim is to encourage young people to develop their maximum potential and to learn coping strategies for life as an adult with an autistic spectrum condition.

Our approach is based on the belief that children and young people with an autistic spectrum condition do not make progress if left alone. Students are guided to reach their potential with consistent, fully informed and appropriate intervention.

The environment is structured, stable and secure with well-planned routines aimed at reducing anxiety and confusion, whilst supporting decision-making and awareness of potential risks and dangers.

Each young person can increase in confidence and build self-esteem through the progressive achievement of realistic individual goals and targets. Once a student is secure with us, we will support and challenge them to move out of their comfort zones and develop the life skills necessary for future success.

“Parents and carers, and other professionals, consider the school to be transformational.

Pupils develop the essential life skills that they need to leave the school as resilient and independent young people.

The school goes above and beyond to help pupils to see a positive future for themselves. Alongside this, pupils benefit from an extraordinary range of experiences that prepare them very well for life after school.”

- Ofsted Education Report, 2025

Teaching and Learning



Our curriculum is designed to enable our young people to build self-esteem and achieve their full potential.

Whinfell School offers access to the National Curriculum using modified programmes of study where appropriate. In addition, we provide vocational training and opportunities for further education, often supporting young people to access the local FE College.

We are fortunate to be in the Lake District and use it to the full with an extensive programme of therapeutic outdoor learning. We also draw upon our close community links to access a wide range of work-experience placements.

The school day is structured and active, including many opportunities for physical activity and therapeutic input. All of our classes are small; no more than three students and a one to one staff ratio where appropriate. Students have individualised timetables which are informed by their education, health and care plan (EHCP) and by an understanding of their own individual learning style. Where necessary staff are skilled in using a wide range of visual supports and prompts. Autism specific awareness is central to the delivery of teaching and learning and all students have Individual Development Plans (IDPs) which are regularly reviewed.

Our students all access the national curriculum and follow the most suitable accredited route for them from GCSE to Entry Level Certificates. We also offer accredited courses in Independent Living and Preparing for Working Life. Post-16 students may remain within the school to continue their studies and we currently offer A-Levels in English, Media Studies, Maths, Geography, Chemistry, and Art.

We also have excellent links with a local FE College where students can be supported to not only access a wider range of opportunities but also become used to working alongside peers in a busier, more mainstream environment.

This can be an important milestone towards independence and bolsters self-esteem. Some students will attend on a part or full-time basis depending on their choice of subjects or sometimes as an evening course. For some of our young people to avoid 'falling off the edge' at 16 and to continue to be academically challenged, the college link is really important.

Our young people have access to the following subject areas:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Maths
- Science
- Hospitality and Catering
- Humanities (Geography, History, RE)
- International Computer Driving Licence (I.C.D.L.)
- Art
- Music
- P.E
- Foreign Language
- Drama
- Citizenship
- Therapeutic Outdoor Learning
- Personal Social and Health Education
- SMSC
- Independence Programme
- Social Skills
- Work Experience and Enterprise
- Therapeutic and Clinical Interventions
- Relationship and Sex Education

Therapeutic Outdoor Learning



Therapeutic Outdoor Learning is one of the cornerstones of Cambian Whinell School.

Therapeutic Outdoor Learning (TOL) is one of the cornerstones of our curriculum at Cambian Whinell School. It is a vital element in 'grounding' the boys so that they fully engage in the wider programme of education and personal development.

TOL involves the use of the outdoors as a central part of our provision. The activities we use may be anything from adventurous 'outdoor pursuits' (canoeing, climbing, mountain-biking, caving etc,) through to working on our allotment, on local farms or in the National Park. All activities are very closely linked to each young person's IDP targets as described in their EHCP or in their SEN Statement.

Sessions are often specifically informed by the therapy team and may be designed to enhance areas such as communication skills, collaboration and expressive language or may focus on developing motor skills, core stability or co-ordination, for example.

Psychological benefits of Therapeutic Outdoor Learning (TOL)

Research evidence increasingly suggests many benefits of spending time in the natural world for young people's psychological and physical well-being, including:

- Reduced stress • Better concentration • Improved feelings of well-being
- Independence • Problem solving skills • Self-discipline • Team work
- Development of social skills

Students at Cambian Whinell School enjoy TOL, which in itself is reason enough for participating. The benefits as described above have a positive impact on their engagement with classroom-based learning where they demonstrate improved confidence and better independent learning skills. Through engaging in TOL, young people develop positive relationships with each other and the adults who support them. They enjoy a wide range of adventures which provide a useful collection of shared experiences which they recall and talk about together long after the events have taken place. Engaging in TOL highlights strengths and abilities and ensures that all of the young people at Cambian Whinell School experience success.

Alongside this we recognise the immense psychological benefits for our young people of spending time in the outdoors. It is a great environment for developing risk awareness and, in a carefully supported way, of pushing students out of their comfort zones without unduly raising anxiety.

“The school never rushed me into things, but would obviously encourage if they thought it would be good for me. TOL, Therapeutic Outdoor Learning, was something I really didn't want to do at the start, but after a few weeks I eventually went on a session and loved it.

That experience helped me gain trust in the schools judgement and understanding of me. They clearly just wanted what they thought was best for me. If they knew I wouldn't benefit from something, they wouldn't suggest it.”

- Jack (Student)

Clinical and Therapeutic Support



At Whinfell we benefit from having a closely integrated multi-disciplinary team that includes:

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- Psychology (education and clinical where needed)
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Psychiatry

The team informs the waking curriculum and the environment around each young person. We have a solution-focussed approach and concentrate on developing emotional self-regulation and resilience. We focus on the development of personal, social, communication and living skills and deliver through an informed Individual Development Plan for each young person.

Profile

The key to our success is that we view every young person as an individual and do not define them by perceived deficits.

It is crucial for any young person coming to Whinfell that the move works and we do all we can to ensure this happens.

We have to feel assured that we can meet the needs of the individual and manage the impact they may have on the other young people whose home it already is. As an integrated team we review all referrals before offering to carry out an assessment in person. Any decision to offer a place will consider these factors:

- We are an autism-specialist provision so the young person will identified traits or a diagnosis of ASD.
- Our cohort access a full curriculum and timetable studying accredited routes based on ability.
- Our young people often present with challenging behaviours when they first arrive. We need to feel reassured that the change of environment and support put in place will reduce behaviours. The physical building is not large and sustained high-level behaviours cannot be managed long-term without a big impact on housemates.
- We will need to feel assured that behaviours are AS/ASD driven. We would not normally accept young people who had significant SEMH needs or underlying complex mental health issues.
- We are not a secure setting and have direct access to town, busy roads and the open countryside. We would need to risk assess carefully if there is a history of going missing from home or using illegal substances.

Residential Care



We strive to create a homely residential environment for our young people where they feel safe, comfortable and valued.

Our main building is in two Victorian houses with a large extension. This forms both home and the school, creating a lovely environment with all facilities on one site.

On the ground floor within the main building, we have a spacious and comfortable lounge, a separate games room with a pool table and arcade games, and a large, open plan kitchen and dining area in which students enjoy meals, and are taught cookery lessons.

Also on the ground floor is our Therapy Room, a comfortable and relaxing space with bean bags and a therapy swing. This room is designated for our Clinical and Therapeutic team to hold consultations and sessions with our students.

We have 10 furnished bedrooms on the second floor, of which 4 have en-suite modern bathroom facilities. Students are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms with colours, decorations and ornaments of their choice and are supported with their decisions around the personal items they would like to have in their own spaces.

Young people will initially live in the main house until they are about 16 when they may have the opportunity to move into our off-site 4 bedroom 'independence' house at Kendal Green which is less than a 5 minute walk away.

Any move will be dependent on the needs and development of the individual young person but we aim for most of our young people to transition through Kendal Green. This gives those approaching adulthood a chance to further develop independence and life skills, preparing them for life beyond Cambian Whinfell School.

Family Contact



At Cambian Whinfell School, we work together in partnership with parents, ensuring a joined-up approach to care.

Prior to a student arriving at our school, we encourage family visits so that the familiarisation process can begin, not only with the surroundings, but also with the staff who will be directly involved with their son's care and education.

Once a student is established with us, parents are encouraged to keep in close contact with the school via our dedicated phone line to discuss progress.

Some of our students and their families have had traumatic experiences and breakdowns in the family home. If this is the case we work with them and their family, slowly progressing them into day and then weekend home visits when the time is right.

At Cambian Whinfell School we have a very settled staff group which means many parents remain in close contact with the same staff members during the duration of their son's time with us.

Case Study

Student C had not been in education for 3 years, and had a diagnosis of ASD & Developmental Language Disorder – possible ADHD. He had difficulties with communication and interaction – language processing difficulties included; difficulties understanding instruction sequencing & problem solving. He could not reflect upon the reasons for and consequences of his actions.

Student C's tendency to refuse to comply could result in angry aggressive behaviour, and he had weak non verbal communication skills, with restricted eye contact and limited use of verbal expression. His speech, language and communication skills were impacted by his complex emotional and behavioural needs. Verbal communication would range from 1-2 words to a relatively mature grammatically complex sentence (when following his own agenda). At home, Student C wore very little in a way of clothing and preferred to wear shorts & a t-shirt. His diet had become limited, with a preference for junk food.

From a learning perspective, Student C had below average fine motor skills, co-ordination, balance, strength and agility, poor handwriting & weak hand strength (use of computers for writing), as well as below average independent social and practical skills. He had a tendency to stay up all night and sleep in the day.

Student C demonstrated difficulties in school from a young age. He could read but found reading and writing lessons difficult. His academic performance was well below what is expected, with poor concentration, difficulty with attention and listening. He would talk negatively about his work and had severe working memory problems, expecting others to do work for him. He also found it difficult to work in groups and would take personal offence to mild corrections, finding it difficult to move on.

As Student C progressed at Whinfell, his confidence grew, alongside his attendance record at school which resulted in him obtaining fantastic education grades including the highest level possible in GCSE Art - a Grade 9!

An exert from his first Whinfell education report:

Student C has made a fantastic start to his time at Whinfell School. He has attended school everyday after his settling in period. He has joined in lessons and has had a positive attitude in trying to achieve his best. He has shown himself to be caring about others and has been keen to make friendships. Whilst forging new relationships he must be mindful not to get dragged into negative situations and try to walk away instead. I look forward to teaching him next year when he will be starting his KS4 journey.

First report attendance – 85%

Exerts from his end of KS4 report –

English: C was working towards his Functional Skills level 2 this term and therefore we did lots of exam practice on how to read and interpret non fiction texts and how to compose a good piece of transactional writing.

Science: C has demonstrated a really positive attitude to learning throughout his last term. He has worked hard on developing his practical investigation skills, and his theoretical knowledge. He has had fantastic attendance in his science lessons, and has really given his studies his all. He has been able to use an impressive range of scientific vocabulary with accuracy, and apply this to a range of different investigations that we have carried out.

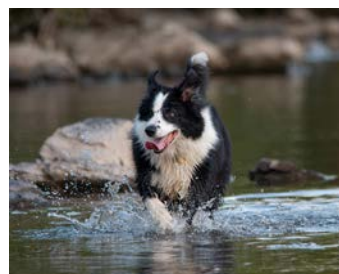
This is such a positive report, with so much to be proud of! You have achieved so much this term, not just in the classroom but also across a range of extra curricular activities. You have also been busy developing your independent living skills, producing some fabulous dishes in independent cooking and travelling independently to a variety of locations, showing maturity and self sufficiency which will put you in good stead for when its time to move on from Whinfell.

Attendance throughout KS4 - 92%

Exert from C latest report

C you have had a fantastic term and there is so much to be proud of! You have embarked on your college career with maturity and are making good progress towards your studies. Tutors speak positively about the progress you are making and your attitude to learning. You have undertaken your preparation for adulthood curriculum as well, which is a really vital part of your development and to make sure you are in the best possible position for your next steps at the end of the year. You have also continued to develop your photography, taking part in sessions with a local photographer and perfecting your skills further, and I am looking forward to developing your work experience programme further in the new year.

Student C's Photography





Extra-Curricular Activities

Additional activities in and out of school hours complement the curriculum and focus on the developmental needs of each young person. All young people have Individual Development Plans (IDP) which are informed by the multi-disciplinary team and are regularly reviewed.

Very few of our young people have ever previously participated in school sports and PE but we support them to do so and we have competed in football, athletics and fell-running fixtures. We have won Table Cricket and Boccia competitions and have regularly taken part in Tag-Rugby sessions with other schools.

The physical and mental health benefits of participation are enormous. One of our students has competed in indoor climbing competitions at a national level (which led to work experience where he is now employed full-time at a climbing wall).

We have a summer camp programme and expeditions to the mountains of the Scottish Highlands and Snowdonia alongside our daily trips into the Lake District. Young people can take part in the John Muir Award Scheme, carrying out environmental work in the National Park. We have an established annual ski-trip to Bulgaria, the benefits of which are enormous.

Older students have bespoke independence programmes at our Kendal Green site in a semi-independent residential setting. Here they will develop the skills and resilience to be as independent as possible when they eventually set out on the next part of their journey.

Community Links



Our students make full use of the resources we have in Kendal to develop recreational, social, living, work and independence skills in a real-life setting.

Other existing community links include:

- Gyms
- Leisure Centre
- Golf Club
- Church Youth Club
- Army Cadets
- Dance Classes
- Taekwondo
- Squash Club
- Jui-jitsu
- Gaming Workshop
- Music Workshop
- Rugby Club
- Fell-running Club
- Athletics Club
- Climbing Wall
- Nearby Lakes
- Cinema
- Restaurants and Cafes
- Kendal 6th Form College
- Work Experience Opportunities
- Weekend Activities

The school is keen to encourage active links with the community and will ensure that young people are offered every opportunity to integrate into the activities of local groups, whether on or off site.

Our older students are also involved in a variety of work activities around Kendal and its surrounding towns and villages.

Our students are encouraged to continue their learning while they venture out into the community.

For example, we have no squash court on site so those of our boys who wish to play squash are supported to join Kendal Squash Club, book a court, pay on arrival and play in public, which helps their confidence, communication and interaction skills.

Whinfell School

Outcomes 2024

GCSE

1 x Mathematics
with a Grade 6

1 x English
with a Grade 5

2 x Double Award
Science with
Grades 5-5

3 x Art, securing grades 9, 7 & 6

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

1 x English - Level 2

3 x English - Level 1

2 x Mathematics
- Level 1

FURTHER RESULTS

1 x NVQ Diploma in
Hospitality Services
- Level 2

2 x Vocational Level Hospitality and Catering
- Level 2 with 1 x Distinction & 1 x Merit

2 x International
Certification of Digital
Literacy - Level 2

2 x Certificate
Science
- Entry Level 3

2 x Certificate
Mathematics
- Entry Level 3

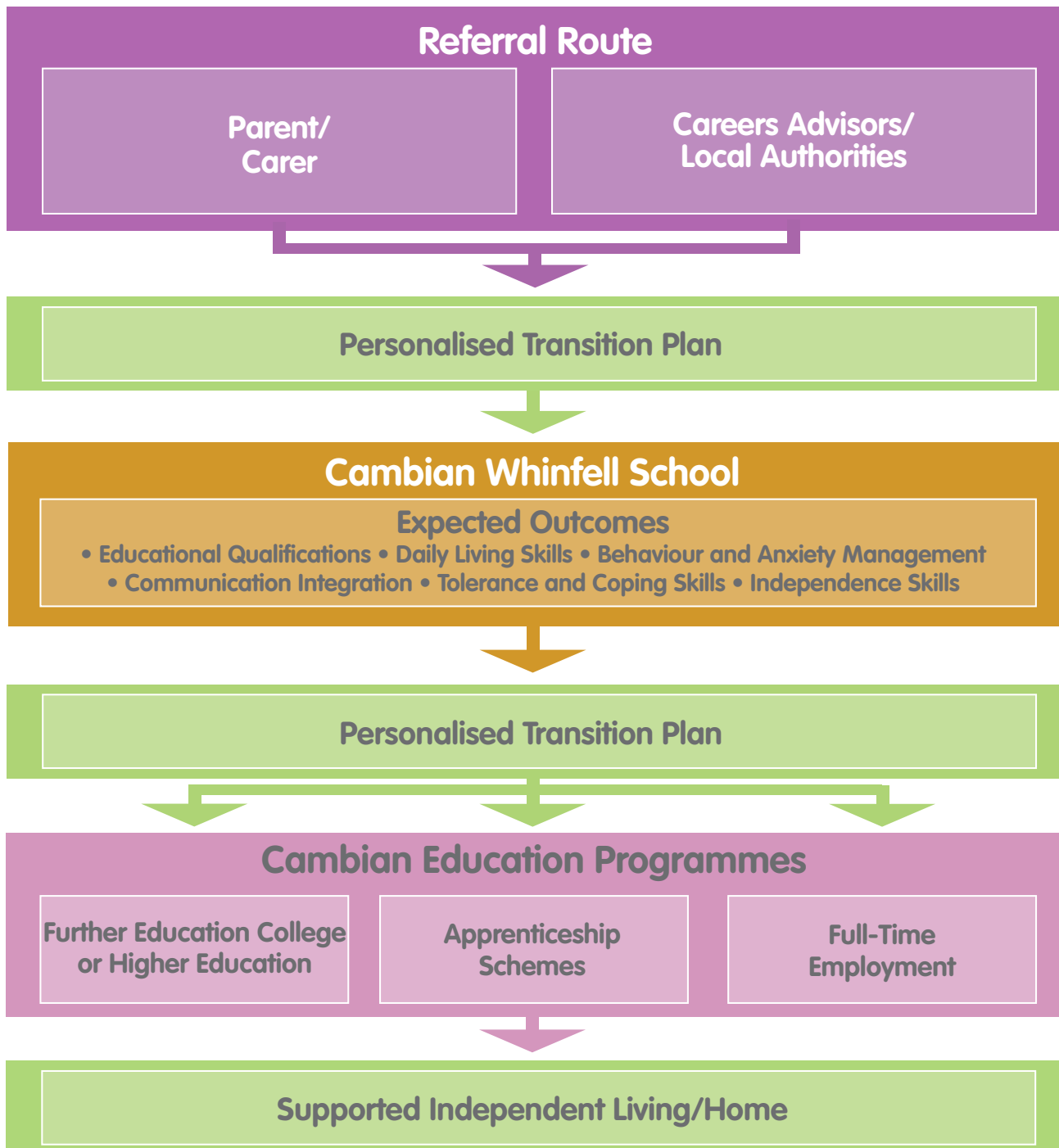
2 x PE
- Entry Level 3

1 x Vocational Level
Preparation for
Adulthood - Entry Level 3

1 x Certificate
Mathematics
- Entry Level 1

Transition Pathway

We focus on developing education, life and vocational skills that support a successful transition into adulthood.



Admissions



Securing your child's future

For more information about Cambian Whinfell School, the staff, and an in depth look at our curriculum, services, outcomes and approach head to:

www.cambiangroup.com/whinfell-school

Assessment and Admission

Assessment begins when we first receive an expression of interest and review the paperwork. If we feel we are likely to meet need we will offer to visit and meet the young person, their parents and social worker. We may also contact the education setting and any professionals who have been involved to date.

When we have offered a place and funding has been confirmed, we will work with all parties involved and support an agreed transition plan. This may involve further visits to home or to school including an overnight stay if that is felt necessary. Care, education and clinical staff will introduce themselves to the young person and keep in touch.

The first three months at Whinfell is always an extended assessment period during which time our multi disciplinary team (MDT) and education will carry out baseline assessments. These will further inform the way ahead. Going forward we report termly on education, have comprehensive annual reviews and regular meetings between key workers and learning mentors.

We recognise how vital the link is with parents is and always want to work closely together. MDT share strategies that we find effective and offer to meet with families at the end of each half-term. We also have an annual Sports and Open Day where the MDT team run short parental seminars.

Additional Information



Safeguarding Statement

The parents of students at Cambian Whinell School should be aware that the School has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of their students. This responsibility necessitates a safeguarding policy and the School may need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies when there are concerns about a child's welfare. This policy complies with guidance from the DfE and Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP). The School recognises it is an agent of referral and not of investigation. Anyone can make a referral to children's social care, if necessary. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for the School is Jennifer Carradus and the Deputy DSL are Paddy Sandham and Emma Brown.

Complaints Procedure

We know there will be times when students, carers, parents or placing authorities will want to give us feedback about our school and we will always be happy to hear from you. If you feel that you would like to make a suggestion, let us know about something you were pleased with, or tell us we did not meet your expectations, please contact the school via the details on the main page. A complaints procedure allows for both formal and informal complaints.

Informal complaints can be dealt with quickly, while formal complaints should be made in writing. Our full complaints policy is available above or from the school on request. This policy is designed to help you raise concerns and ensures your complaint will be dealt with fairly. Should you wish to take your complaint further or if you feel you are unable to discuss the details with the school, please contact the Director of Education, especially if your complaint relates to the school leadership.

The Proprietor

The proprietor of the school is Farouq Sheikh, Chair of the CareTech Board. The representative of the Proprietor of the school, whose address for correspondence during both term times and holidays, is:

Andrew Sutherland, Operations Director - Education,
Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1AG.

The representative of the proprietor may be contacted at
Andrew.Sutherland@caretech-uk.com