

Inspection of Cambian Hartlepool School

Unit E, Sovereign Way, Sovereign Park, Hartlepool TS25 1NN

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 September 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

This is a calm, orderly school, where pupils feel happy and cared for. Pupils trust the adults around them. Staff listen and support pupils to make the right choices. Some pupils and their parents and carers told inspectors that the school has positively transformed their lives.

Pupils at this school have a range of social, emotional and mental health needs. They benefit from warm relationships with staff. Pupils love 'Big Ted', the school's therapeutic dog. The school uses Ted effectively to support pupil's mental health with cuddles and walks.

Pupils appreciate having small class sizes. They said that this enables them to be effective learners. The school has high expectations about how pupils should behave. Pupils have personalised passports that outline how adults can best support their behaviour. Staff support pupils to regulate their behaviour successfully. As a result, pupils are keen to demonstrate positive learning behaviours.

Pupils have access to vocational experiences, such as construction. This helps pupils to make links between their learning and potential careers. Typically, pupils who attend regularly achieve well.

Pupils enjoy a range of educational visits. For example, they visit London to enable them to learn about democracy.

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

The school has an ambitious curriculum for its pupils. Staff work collectively towards ensuring the best possible outcomes for each pupil. The curriculum is frequently adapted to ensure that it meets the needs of each pupil. Approaches such as bespoke adult interaction or the use of practical equipment enable pupils to access their learning. This helps pupils' learning experiences to be closely matched to their individual needs.

Some aspects of the school's curriculum are highly detailed and developed. These subjects provide pupils with a coherent sequence of lessons that successfully build knowledge and skills. However, some subjects need refinement and embedding to ensure that pupils know and remember more over time. This means some pupils experience inconsistency in the quality of their learning.

The school's assessment system is becoming embedded. Leaders collect information on pupil progress and use it to identify gaps in learning. This enables them to provide targeted support, helping to close gaps and improve outcomes for pupils.

The school has recently introduced a new phonics programme for those pupils at the early stages of reading. Pupils receive individual phonics teaching to help them catch up. Pupils read well. The school matches reading books to pupil's phonics

attainment. Books have appropriate content to interest the older pupils. This means that pupils are increasingly able to read with an improving independence and fluency.

The school ensures that pupils positively contribute to society. They engage in voluntary work, such as litter picking in the community or painting walls. They support charity work at Hartlepool football ground. This helps to build pupils' resilience and self-esteem. Pupils discuss and debate in small groups. They respect and acknowledge each other's views. Pupils know how to stay safe on and offline. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to stay physically and mentally healthy. The school uses food technology lessons to support pupils' understanding of different cultures. Pupils enjoy cooking foods from around the world. This connects pupils' understanding of history, traditions and values.

The school has begun to challenge the low attendance of some pupils. Leaders understand the barriers that make attendance difficult for some pupils. It has put appropriate actions in place to support pupils back into school. However, this is in the early stages of implementation. This means some pupils continue to miss vital learning and wider aspects of school life.

Staff enjoy working at the school and feel well supported by leaders and the proprietor. The school manages workload effectively, contributing to a positive and collaborative working environment. The school and the proprietor demonstrate secure skills and knowledge to ensure that the independent school standards (the standards') are met consistently. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- In a small number of subjects, some improvements to curriculums, including early reading, are more recent. Some pupils' knowledge and skills are not as secure as they could be in these subjects. This is because pupils have had less opportunity to secure some important aspects of their learning. The school should ensure that improvements to these curriculums are embedded and implemented fully to support pupils to develop a strong body of knowledge in these subjects.
- The school's attendance strategy is at an early stage of implementation and is not reaching some pupils as well as others. This means some pupils with low attendance miss out on essential learning. The school should continue to strengthen its partnership with parents to identify and address specific barriers to attendance.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

School details

Unique reference number	135424
DfE registration number	805/6002
Local authority	Hartlepool Borough
Inspection number	10374856
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Childcare Limited
Chair	Farouq Sheikh
Headteacher	Paul Barnfather
Annual fees (day pupils)	£59,992
Telephone number	01429 224965
Website	www.cambianguroup.com/childrensservices/specialisteducationservices/esddayschools.aspx
Email address	paul.barnfather@cambianguroup.com
Dates of previous inspection	12 to 14 January 2022

Information about this school

- The school operates from Unit E, Sovereign Way, Sovereign Park, Hartlepool TS25 1NN.
- The school is part of Cambian Childcare Limited.
- The school is registered to admit 18 pupils. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- There are Year 7 to Year 11 pupils on site.
- Cambian Hartlepool School is a special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2025.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders from the school.
- An inspectors met with a representative of the proprietor board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, art and design and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors completed a premises check.

- Inspectors also scrutinised a range of documentation. This included documentation and information relating to the standards and the school's improvement plans.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during social times.
- An inspector spoke by telephone to two local authority representatives.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. An inspector spoke to some parents by telephone to gather their views. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. Inspectors spoke with groups of staff and pupils to gain their views about the school.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dughall McCormick

His Majesty's Inspector

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