

Oakwood School

c/o Cambian Education, Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1AG

Inspection date

1 October 2025

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2) and 2(2)(h)

- The school has a written curriculum policy that clearly outlines its educational aims and the approaches it takes to curriculum delivery. This policy is supported by comprehensive and well-structured schemes of work that detail how the curriculum is implemented across subjects.
- The curriculum is broad and enables pupils to study a wide range of national curriculum subjects. Off-site activities, including visits to a horse riding centre, enrich the curriculum and offer pupils meaningful and memorable experiences.
- Careful consideration is given to the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of pupils. Staff know and understand the needs of pupils well. They ensure the curriculum provides pupils with the knowledge they most need to progress.
- These independent school standards (the standards) are met.

Paragraph 3, 3(a) 3(c), 3(d), 3(g) and 3(h)

- Staff plan and deliver lessons that build on what pupils already know. Teachers provide clear explanations and guidance and address misconceptions swiftly. Staff ensure lessons are interesting and meaningful to pupils. This helps pupils to engage well, despite having often struggled with engagement at previous settings.
- Frequent checks are made on how well pupils are learning the curriculum. These are used to plan lessons to address pupils' next steps in learning. Staff are well supported by an experienced SEND coordinator who also ensures that pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan targets are carefully considered.
- Staff and pupils enjoy positive relationships and lessons are typically calm and well managed. This helps staff to manage pupils' behaviour effectively and encourages pupils to understand their own behaviours and learn to behave responsibly.
- These standards are met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 9, 9(b)

- Although a written behaviour policy is in place, it is not implemented as rigorously as it could be. Sometimes records are not made in a timely manner. This means the school does not have sufficient oversight of pupils' behaviour chronologies to identify whole-school trends or patterns in behaviours. The school's work to help pupils improve their behaviour is therefore not as effective as it could be.
- This standard is not met.

Paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)

- Safeguarding has a high priority. School staff are diligent in ensuring that guidance is followed to keep pupils safe within an open safeguarding culture.
- Staff have a clear understanding of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. As a result of effective training, they are confident in identifying concerns about pupils and know precisely how to report these to the designated safeguarding leads.
- Daily briefings are used to keep staff well informed about safeguarding matters and to create space for purposeful discussion. The school maintains frequent, timely communication with pupils' home settings and external agencies involved in their care, including social workers.
- These standards are met.

Paragraph 9(a) and 9(c)

- The school has a written behaviour policy in place that is available on request to parents and carers. The policy sets out expectations and sanctions, taking into account the specific needs of pupils who have experienced significant trauma.
- The school keeps appropriate records of the sanctions imposed for serious misbehaviour. These include when restrictive physical intervention has been used.
- These standards are met.

Paragraphs 11, 14 and 15

- The school has a written policy in place that sets out how the school complies with all necessary health and safety legislation.
- Staff are well qualified and bring considerable experience to their roles. High staffing levels reflect the significant and complex needs of the pupils. Throughout the school day, pupils are closely supervised to ensure their safety and to support both their emotional and physical well-being.
- The school maintains an admission and attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- These standards are met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The school maintains a safe environment by conducting and implementing thorough risk assessments for both the site and pupils' activities. Where necessary, appropriate

and well-planned measures are put in place to minimise risk and ensure the safety of pupils, staff, and visitors.

- Comprehensive risk assessments are developed for each pupil, enabling staff to gain a thorough understanding of individual needs, anxieties and behaviours. These assessments are reviewed often and offer detailed guidance to help staff work effectively with pupils and ensure their safety.
- These standards are met.

Paragraph 32(1)(c)

- The school does not have a website but makes its safeguarding policy available to parents and carers on request.
- These standards are met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- The school is housed within a number converted farm buildings which are maintained to a high standard. Pupils benefit from a wealth of attractive, safe, indoor and outdoor learning spaces.
- This standard is met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(b)

- The school has experienced considerable staffing changes since the last standard inspection. At times, this has coincided with challenges in governance and oversight from the proprietor body. However, the structure of the regional team that oversees the school has since been strengthened and is now offering effective strategic support. Despite these improvements, the school is not consistently meeting the standards at the time of this inspection.
- These standards are not met.

Paragraph 34(1)(c)

- The school places a strong emphasis on promoting pupils' well-being, with emotional health at the core of its ethos. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed to include opportunities for physical activity and to support pupils in learning about their health and well-being through personal, social, and health education lessons.
- This standard is met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school's accessibility plan is suitable. It includes all the requirements, including how staff ensure the site, curriculum and documentation are made accessible to stakeholders including pupils, parents and carers.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	131033
DfE registration number	893/6097
Inspection number	10421598

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Childcare Ltd
Chair	Andrew Sutherland
Headteacher	Mrs Louise Curel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£59,993
Telephone number	0800 138 1184
Website	www.cambiangroup.com/childrensservices/specialisteducationservices
Email address	Louise.Curel@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous standard inspection	14 to 16 November 2023

Information about this school

- Oakwood School offers places to pupils who have experienced significant trauma. It is part of the Cambian Group which provides specialist education services across the UK.
- The school's last standard inspection was in November 2023, when it was judged to be good in all areas and met all of the standards.
- The school does not have a website. Hard copies of policies and other documents are available on request.

- Pupils are placed at the school by local authorities across England and Wales. All pupils at the school currently have EHC plans or Welsh equivalent.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) as a result of concerns raised about pupils' safety, well-being and educational provision.
- This inspection was carried out without notice.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of 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.
- To check compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors met with the headteacher, the regional SEND coordinator and senior representatives of the proprietor body.
- An inspector spoke to a representative of one of the commissioning local authorities, a parent and a carer.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils and visited some lessons.

Inspection team

Gareth Morgan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Corinne Biddell

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that-
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

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