

Cambian Home Tree School

172 March Road, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0LP

Unique reference number (URN): 141879

Emergency inspection report:

3 March 2026

Overall outcome

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

This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE), which is the registration authority for independent schools. It was commissioned because of concerns raised with the DfE about safeguarding at the school.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

When we carry out emergency inspections of independent schools, we report on the school's likely compliance with part 8 of the independent school standards first. Under part 8, the proprietor is required to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards consistently. The standard in part 8 is intended to ensure that the quality of leadership and management at the school is sufficient for that purpose.

The proprietor body does not have secure oversight of the safeguarding systems and records in place. Administratively, a number of records lack the required detail about actions taken and the outcomes of concerns raised, as set out in statutory guidance. In addition, the safeguarding culture does not ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils effectively. In some cases, the school has not taken appropriate or timely action following a concern being raised.

The proprietor and school leaders are committed to providing a nurturing and caring environment for pupils. They have prioritised building positive relationships to support pupils' wellbeing, and this has been effective for some pupils. However, not all pupils' long-term welfare and personal development are effectively supported. This is due to an inconsistent offer to meet pupils' therapeutic needs. Some pupils are not receiving the support they require to meet their complex social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

School leaders do not have secure knowledge or understanding of statutory safeguarding guidance or the independent school standards. As a result, the standards are not consistently met. The proprietor body has not provided leaders with the training required to develop this understanding.

This part of the standards is not met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Safeguarding

The school has a suitable safeguarding policy in place. It identifies the safeguarding leads and sets out how the school intends to respond to safeguarding concerns. The policy meets the requirements of statutory guidance.

The proprietor has ensured that a suitable single central record is in place, recording all required checks for those who work in the school. Safeguarding leads and staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. This includes the expectation that all staff read part one of 'Keeping children safe in education' annually.

The school does not consistently follow its safeguarding policy. In some instances, serious allegations and concerns have been raised and the school has not ensured that appropriate action has been taken. Although external agencies have taken action in some cases, the school did not know about or record the actions and outcomes.

The school has not applied the appropriate level of professional curiosity to a number of safeguarding reports. Numerous concerns have been recorded as 'does not meet threshold' when the school's own policy and statutory guidance indicate that further action should have been taken. The school's approach to responding to safeguarding concerns is inconsistent and does not ensure the safety and welfare of pupils.

Behaviour and supervision of pupils

The school has a suitable behaviour policy that clearly sets out the therapeutic approach the school intends to take to meet pupils' needs. It also outlines the consequences that apply when behaviour does not meet expectations.

Behaviour records are detailed and include information about actions taken and subsequent outcomes, although this is not always consistent. Overall, the number of behaviour incidents is low, including low levels of physical intervention. School leaders are clear about the process to follow when situations require a higher level of intervention from staff.

Pupils report few concerns about behaviour. They typically describe positive levels of respect between each other. Staff are well attuned to pupils' needs and know them well. The positive relationships they maintain with pupils help to ensure a calm and positive learning environment.

The school has ensured a suitable ratio of staff to pupils, meaning pupils are well supervised.

Anti-bullying

The proprietor has put in place a well-considered anti-bullying policy. It clearly sets out the response that will be taken when bullying is alleged.

Incidents of bullying are very rare. Staff take swift action when concerns are raised. Pupils spoken to are clear that bullying does not happen at the school.

Health and safety

The school has a clear health and safety policy that outlines the processes for maintaining health and safety and the responsibilities of both the school and the proprietor body.

The school generally follows its health and safety policy well. There is a clear schedule of daily, weekly and monthly checks, including checks on water temperatures, fire safety systems and internal and external lighting. These checks are well recorded.

Admissions and attendance

The school's admissions register is appropriate and includes all required information for pupils who attend the school.

However, attendance is not recorded accurately. There are numerous instances where incorrect codes have been used to record attendance or absence. This is a systemic issue. In some cases, pupils have been marked as engaging with education when they have not, resulting in attendance figures that are higher than they should be.

The school makes appropriate checks on pupils who are absent. This includes home visits for day pupils and daily visits to the linked residential home to promote positive behaviour. However, some of the most vulnerable pupils do not attend well. The school has not yet identified the most effective strategies to improve attendance for these pupils.

Risk assessment

The school does not consistently implement its risk assessment policy. Although there have been recent improvements in some individual pupil risk assessments, some remain too generic and do not capture all known risks associated with each pupil.

Risk assessments relating to pupils who abscond are not detailed enough. The content is generic across all pupils, meaning the school has not considered precisely what is required to mitigate risks for individual pupils and keep them safe.

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 15, 16, 16(a), 16(b) of this part of the standards are not met.

The school's accessibility plan

The school has an appropriately written accessibility plan, which demonstrates how pupils with a range of needs can access the school facilities, curriculum and wider opportunities. The accessibility plan aligns with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under sections 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, at the request of the registration authority for independent schools.

Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Following our updated inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

This inspection was carried out without notice.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders including representatives of the proprietor body. They also spoke with staff, pupils and a representative of the local authority.

The school is part of Cambian Childcare LTD, which is owned by CareTech. Cambian has 22 schools and colleges across England.

Farouq Sheikh is the Chair of the proprietor body for the Cambian Group. Farouq Sheikh is represented by Andrew Sutherland as part of Cambian Childcare LTD.

This school operates from: 172 March Road, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0LP

Pupils who attend the school have complex SEMH needs. They have missed significant periods of time at school prior to arriving here. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan.

The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Lead inspector	
Nina Marabese	His Majesty's Inspector
Team inspector	
Michael Williams	His Majesty's Inspector

About this school	
Proprietor	Cambian Childcare Ltd
Headteacher	Simon Paynter
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
Capacity	25
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	7
Number of part-time pupils of compulsory school age on roll	0
Age range of pupils	12 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Annual fees for day pupils	£59,093
Email address	simon.paynter@cambiangroup.com

Annex. Independent school standards and national minimum standards
Independent school standards that the school has not met
Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and

- 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

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
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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