

Cambian Southwick Park School

Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, GL20 7DG

Inspection dates	22–24 October 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Pupils learn well and make good progress because of good teaching, good therapeutic support and an interesting curriculum.
- The headteacher and senior staff have high standards and have brought about continuing improvements in the quality of education.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school and pupils enjoy coming in every day as shown by their good attendance.
- Pupils behave well because staff plan together effectively in advance, how to respond to the pupils if they are upset and most act consistently when necessary.
- There are good arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils, and staff receive regular and comprehensive training.

It is not yet outstanding because

- On a few occasions, members of staff do not adapt the curriculum, pitch their language or set work at the right level for pupils.
- Support staff, especially care staff, are not always well deployed in lessons.
- A few more-recently appointed teachers are not adept in carrying out agreed strategies when pupils become upset.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was undertaken with one day's notice. Three lessons involving three teachers were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff members and pupils. The inspector took account of 28 responses to staff questionnaires.
- There were insufficient responses to the Parent View online questionnaire to gather parents' and carers' views, but the inspector examined the results of the school's own recent survey of parents, carers and pupils.
- Written evidence was examined, including: pupils' work; records of academic progress, behaviour and personal development; individual educational plans and other planning documentation; and attendance records.

Inspection team

Mick Megee, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cambian Southwick Park School is dually registered as an independent special school and a children's home for 40 boys and girls aged from seven to 19 years who have severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, challenging behaviour and/or complex needs.
- The education provision was registered in October 2012 and opened in January 2013. The pupils live and are taught in small residential units close to the main administration building on a rural site close to Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire.
- The proprietors, the Cambian Group, have eight other special schools in various locations throughout England, as well as specialist residential units.
- This is the school's first inspection.
- There are currently six students aged eight to 15 years on the school's roll. Each student has a statement of special educational needs.
- The school aims to 'actively enable each and every one of our pupils to achieve their personal best; however it is defined for them or by them'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that pupils can make outstanding progress by making sure that:
 - teachers always give pupils tasks that precisely match their needs and abilities
 - staff who work in the classroom, particularly care staff, are deployed effectively and given the specialist skills and knowledge they need to support pupils' learning
 - classroom staff make their meaning clear by speaking slowly, signing and using symbols more effectively
 - all teachers, particularly those appointed more recently, develop the skills required to improve the behaviour and personal development of pupils.
- Ensure that the curriculum is adapted so that the needs of all are served well.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

The quality of the pupils' achievement is good. The school maintains comprehensive records and regularly evaluates the pupils' progress in comparison with the progress of pupils in other schools nationally. Pupils' levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy are below expectations for their age. However, shortly after they start at the school they begin to make good progress with their communication, reading, writing and numeracy skills. Achievement is strong in physical education and in the creative arts because of the very good resources available to the pupils in these subjects.

The school's records and lesson observations show that the good curriculum, very good therapeutic and pastoral care and often skilful teaching have a good impact on their achievement. Achievement is not yet outstanding because progress is occasionally hampered and uneven when the teachers, particularly those new to the school, do not adopt the most successful teaching strategies for pupils. Pupils concentrate well and apply their basic skills, such as reading, writing and number skills, in most lessons because of the good links that teachers make between subjects.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour is good both in and out of lessons. The school keeps a close eye on improvements in behaviour and attitudes by tracking these personal attributes throughout the day and recording important developments. The school's information shows that the high expectations of the staff are being realised, and pupils quickly become much less anxious and less unpredictable. They are increasingly able to remain focused on the interesting lesson activities and are treated consistently by most staff. The staff deal with pupils patiently and respectfully, providing good role models. Behaviour is not outstanding because a few teachers, particularly those who are new to the school, have not developed the full range of skills necessary to provide activities at a level that will keep pupils fully engaged and motivated. Despite this, pupils generally participate well in lessons. They speak positively about the teaching, and parents and carers report that their children enjoy coming to school.

The attendance of most pupils is very good. Pupils say that the school is a calm place of learning. Pupils rarely bother each other, often cooperating, and lessons generally proceed without any overt disruption, enabling pupils to achieve well. Pupils who are feeling anxious know how to remove themselves from others and go to a quiet area. There is a high ratio of adults to pupils, and staff coordinate well to execute pre-planned strategies that allow the pupil to return to learning quickly. Pupils know about bullying, and they agree that bullying and racial incidents are rare. They behave safely throughout the day, including when they use the internet.

Through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, pupils have good opportunities to develop their cultural and spiritual awareness, including understanding life beyond home and school. The programme contains many real-life experiences and educational visits, for example to local facilities such as shops and public institutions such as libraries. Pupils contribute well to the school through the school council, and through undertaking jobs around the school such as collecting eggs from the school's chickens. Pupils gain a sense of the diversity of faiths and lifestyles in the wider world through activities such as thematic weeks that link a number of subjects across the curriculum. During the inspection, pupils were learning about the ancient Greeks and a number of pupils were making a Chinese dragon. Where political issues are explored, staff make sure they present a good balance of views.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to become increasingly independent learners. Most teachers have high but realistic expectations of what each pupil can achieve, based on a good understanding of pupils' individual attainment, needs and capabilities. Most teachers make good use of specialist teaching strategies such as individual workstations, visual timetables and exchanging pictures to make their meaning clear. Teaching is not outstanding because occasionally teachers do not provide activities that are pitched at the correct level for all the pupils, and sometimes staff use too many words and symbols, and not enough signs when communicating their expectations. The headteacher systematically checks teachers' assessments, and regularly undertakes lesson observations. Her accurate judgements provide a good basis for teachers to improve their skills. The school encourages the sharing of good practice so that all can learn from the best.

All teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. Classroom teams work well together for the most part, alongside therapeutic staff, to ensure that individual pupils are supported well with regard to their physical, communication, sensory and behavioural requirements. The parent organisation occasionally deploys care staff in the classroom who are unfamiliar with the specialist teaching strategies required. This holds back progress. Pupils are assessed thoroughly when they join the school and regularly through their school careers. The school adopts a belt and braces approach, using two or three different methods of judging how well pupils have progressed and what learning targets need to be set. This gives teachers a reliable and precise picture of what pupils can do and where they need to improve. The school checks the accuracy of its own assessments with other special schools run by the parent organisation and plans to link up with local special schools for the same purpose.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The quality of the curriculum is good and learning builds progressively through each key stage. The school teaches all the subjects of the National Curriculum although there is a strong emphasis on getting pupils ready to learn as well as on the teaching of basic skills in communication, literacy and numeracy. The curriculum comprises a broad and balanced array of teaching and learning activities that cover the needs of pupils with a variety of individual starting points. The curriculum is not outstanding because in a few lessons staff do not change the activities presented quickly enough if the activities are not motivating the pupil or are set too high or too low. Staff carefully prepare personalised education plans alongside pupils, detailing the pupils' preferred style of learning as well as academic targets so that the requirements of pupils' individual statements are met.

In Key Stage 2, the curriculum aims to nurture pupils' independence and self-confidence through a thematic curriculum, with topic areas that encompass all the different subject strands. Older pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 have the opportunity to begin accredited courses and work-related learning. They try out different types of work on the school's farm, shop, canteen and gardens. Pupils are offered good opportunities in physical education including swimming, gym, cycling and trampolining. The curriculum provides the pupils with good opportunities for their creative development in arts, crafts, photography and music. The curriculum in Key Stages 4 and 5 prepares pupils well for leaving school and for independent living. All staff, including those in the care homes where pupils live, work together well, sharing information and assessments so that the pupils' experience of learning is coherent and suitable.

The school has good arrangements to make sure that learning continues outside of the school day. The senior education and care staff work closely together using a key worker system to provide a consistency of approach. There are planned, structured events each evening, weekend and during the holidays. The farm manager, catering manager, shop and cafe manager are all qualified as learning coaches and support the pupils well in acquiring skills in their respective areas.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Good**

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are good and all the independent school standards are met. These arrangements are not outstanding because the location of classrooms on the third floor of one building means that a few pupils are not able to get outside quickly if they need to when they become upset. This makes them a little more anxious than they need to be, and can prevent a speedy return to learning. The school's policies and procedures for all aspects of pupils' welfare are suitable, meet requirements, and are effectively implemented and continuously reviewed by the proprietor. There are good, detailed procedures in place for safeguarding, behaviour management, the prevention of bullying, on-site and off-site safety and first aid. Staff have received the necessary training in safeguarding, including first aid, within the required time scales and to the appropriate levels. All accidents and incidents are recorded appropriately. The school checks all staff to establish their suitability to work with children and these checks are recorded accurately in the single central register. The school pays good attention to assessing any risk attached to activities both on and off the school site. The school employs a qualified specialist company to assess the risk of fire, and all required fire safety procedures and checks are in place, including regular practice drills and the testing of appliances. Attendance and admission registers meet the regulations.

Leadership and management**Good**

The leadership and management of the school are good and the headteacher, together with the senior staff, has high expectations which have been transmitted to and taken up by all staff. The senior leaders have brought about good academic and personal progress in a short time. They know precisely where the provision is strong and where it needs improving. They have a clear vision about what needs to be done to raise standards further and have developed clear plans of action in order to become an outstanding school. The school has in place robust staff appraisal and performance management procedures, based on regular and frequent monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. These processes give staff a good insight into what steps they need to take to improve their practice.

The school supplies parents and carers with all the necessary information, including regular detailed reports on their children's progress. Parents and carers have very positive views of the school. Complaints procedures, although not completely user-friendly, meet requirements, and concerns are properly addressed. The accommodation has been completely refurbished and provides a very pleasant, spacious environment for teaching and learning. The proprietor has ensured that the independent school regulations have been met, including those for the premises. The proprietor is fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and provides good, critical support and challenge to the senior leaders, principally through the managing director.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	138881
Inspection number	422838
DfE registration number	916/6004

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Day special school for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder
School status	Independent
Age range of pupils	7–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Cambian Group
Managing Director	Stephen Bradshaw
Headteacher	Jane Straw
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Annual fees (day pupils)	£195,000
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