

# Southlands School

Vicars Hill, Boldre, Lymington, Hampshire, SO41 5QB

**Inspection dates** 19–21 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management	Require improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough students make the progress that they are capable of from their different starting points.
- Students do not have enough chances to write in English and other subjects of the curriculum. This has an impact on the number of students gaining the higher grades in GCSEs or their equivalents.
- Teaching requires improvement because it does not ensure that students' work is marked effectively to enable them to improve.
- Those who are more able do not always have work that meets their needs. Sometimes students are capable of attaining a higher qualification.
- Students are not always clear how the work they are doing in class relates to a qualification.
- In English, teachers and learning support assistants do not check folders regularly enough to ensure that work is neat and clearly organised.
- Leadership and those responsible for governance are not fully effective because they have not ensured that all staff use a single accurate system that checks upon students' progress from their starting points. They are not always aware of those who are making slower progress.
- Leaders use inaccurate information on students' progress to set targets to improve teachers' performance.
- Middle leaders are not well trained or supported to develop their roles.
- Senior leaders and those responsible for governance do not have a fully accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop.
- Parents say it is hard to find information on the website regarding aspects such as the curriculum.

### The school has the following strengths

- Effective links between care, therapy and education ensure that behaviour at the school is good. Students say that they feel safe and secure.
- The procedures to help students move from the school into further education and training are good.
- Students have the chance to participate in exciting challenges, such as climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This helps them to enjoy school and be prepared for leaving.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed the impact of teaching on students' achievements in nine lessons and part lessons. Most were observed jointly with senior leaders. Students' books and folders were also examined.
- There were discussions with a group of students, staff and a director of The Cambian Group.
- A telephone conversation was held with the local authority designated officer.
- The inspector took account of 29 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Other views of parents were obtained by telephone calls and informal discussions.
- The inspector observed the school's work and analysed a large range of documents and policies, including the school's own data on students' current progress, planning documents and individual education plans. Records relating to behaviour, attendance, risk analysis and safeguarding were also examined.
- The views of staff were analysed through the 20 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Elizabeth Bowes, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Southlands School is an independent special school for day and residential students located in Lymington. It is registered to provide education for 53 boys between 7 and 17. Students have Asperger syndrome and other associated conditions on the autistic spectrum. Many have a background of disrupted education, including those who are 17 years old who are completing their GCSE courses.
- This inspection considered the quality of education provided by the school.
- About 20% of students attend only during the day. Most students are resident in on-site accommodation provided by the parent company, The Cambian Group. The most recent report on the school's residential provision, which took place in June 2014, is available on the Ofsted website.
- A few students are in the care of local authorities.
- All of the students at Southlands School have a statement of special educational needs related either to Asperger syndrome or other autistic spectrum conditions.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage but a few are from minority ethnic groups.
- Some students attend Sparsholt College or Bournemouth and Poole College for their post-14 options courses.
- The school aims to prepare students for the demands of adult life, through a holistic provision of academic care and therapy. The second aim is to encourage students to flourish academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.
- Many of the students proceed on to the Wing Centre in Bournemouth, which provides post-16 education.
- The school comes under the ownership of Cambian Educational Services, the proprietor since 2004.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' progress and the the quality of teaching by ensuring:
  - students have more opportunities to write both in English and in other subjects of the curriculum
  - teachers' marking and guidance always provide advice to students on how to improve their work
  - students are clear how the work they do in class relates to gaining a qualification
  - that those who are more able are given work and obtain qualifications that meet their needs
  - teachers and learning support assistants check that work in English folders is neat and clearly organised.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - implementing an accurate system for checking on students' progress that all staff use to identify and assist those who are making slower progress
  - ensuring that targets for teachers are accurate regarding the progress students make in their class
  - helping middle leaders to effectively develop their role by having more support and training
  - ensuring that the senior leaders and those responsible for governance have a clearer awareness of the school's strengths and areas to develop
  - making sure that the website provides easily accessible information to parents.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards:
  - ensure that there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and that the information from such assessment is utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 3(g)).

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### require improvement

- Leaders do not use an effective system for checking students' progress from their starting points when they join the school. The system that senior managers use is unclear and does not distinguish between a student's progress in reading and writing. Neither does it show whether the qualification the student is working towards is a GCSE or functional skill.
- Middle leaders, not finding the assessment system useful, have created a variety of other systems. The impact of using several systems creates considerable confusion about students' progress. Additionally, the school does not accurately check the progress of different groups of students, such as those who are disadvantaged or more able. Therefore, staff are hampered in their ability to tailor effective support to students and to help those who are making slower progress.
- While the performance of staff is monitored and lessons are observed, the annual progress targets that senior leaders give to staff to help them improve are not effective. This is because the progress information they have is inaccurate.
- Most middle leaders are not fully effective because they have not had enough training and support to develop their roles in helping students achieve well.
- While there is some information on the school's website, parents rightly reported that some information, such as the curriculum, was difficult to find.
- Senior leaders and those responsible for governance have an overoptimistic view of how the school is doing regarding the quality of teaching and the achievement of students. Their view is based more on the improvements in the personal development of students. There are, however, some well-thought-out plans for future improvements.
- The leadership team, particularly the headteacher, has created a culture where students feel safe and behaviour is good. Parents can frequently communicate with their sons and those who care for and teach them. The vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as those who were spoken to, believed that the school is well led and managed. They said that every student is treated with respect and has an equal opportunity to succeed. Students reported they did not feel that there was any discrimination.
- The range of subjects that the school teaches is broad and balanced and contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As well as English and mathematics, students enjoy science, ICT, modern foreign languages, music, art, design and technology, history, geography and physical development. There is an appropriate balance between academic and vocational courses. There are good links with several local colleges. The school offers an extensive range of extra-curricular activities.
- Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, students have recently learnt about the rule of law through a visit to the local court and discussions with a judge. The school's aims include preparing students for the demands of adult life. Careful attention to a students' needs helps fulfil this aim. For example, when they are ready, students are taught to become independent through planning and going on a trip to a neighbouring town independently.
- The suitability of staff to work with children is assured through safe recruitment practices and an up-to-date central register. The school has effective arrangements in place for child protection to ensure all students are fully safeguarded. It meets statutory requirements.
- The school works closely with local authorities regarding annual reviews for students. Hampshire local authority has provided training in teaching religious education. There are close links with the local authority designed safeguarding officer.
- Parents are kept well informed about the procedures regarding making complaints. The procedures for dealing with complaints are robust.
- There is a suitable range of policies regarding the maintenance of the premises, fire safety and first aid. Health and safety is carefully monitored and the school has well-advanced plans to make the pond area safer.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - governance is shared equally between several directors of Cambian education services. They do not hold leaders and teachers to account enough for the progress of the students. They were unaware of the different progress tracking systems in use by the school. Governance has not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
  - there have been some recent changes to personnel, which have resulted in a better understanding

that achievement and the tracking of progress require improvements.

directors are aware of the quality of teaching in the school and good teaching is rewarded. They are aware how any underperformance is addressed and recognise teaching needs to improve.

the directors ensure that there are good links with local authorities. The financial resources made available to the school from the authorities are managed effectively regarding the purchase of resources.

governance ensures that there is tolerance of and respect for students of all faiths.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. A dedicated team of therapists, carers, teachers and support assistants ensure that for the majority of the time students behave well. This is because the school has adopted a behaviour policy where good behaviour is rewarded. There have been almost no physical interventions in the last year and a low number of fixed-term exclusions.
- In lessons, most students listen carefully to the teacher and act on their instructions. There are strong and respectful relationships between all staff and students. Good behaviour is also usually evident in the colleges which students attend for their post-14 options courses.
- Leaders aim to involve students in the everyday life of the school. For some this is through working in the school's kitchens. For others it is through acting as student ambassadors representing the views of others. Students spoken to consider that their views were taken seriously. One of the reasons why behaviour is good is because staff, including the therapy and care departments, focus on students' personal development. An example of this was the 'Wheels Project', a charity fundraiser where students were dropped off in France with bikes and had to make their own way home to Britain. This carefully planned exercise was effective in developing students' skills of being independent.
- The school has developed a careful programme for developing students' spiritual and moral development, based on the understanding of different faiths as well as an understanding of self. There is a focus on reducing students' anxiety levels and helping them to succeed. For example, students recently canoed 60 miles through the Great Glen in Scotland. They then went on a 75-mile bike ride from Inverness to Fort William and then climbed Ben Nevis. Students reported that they really enjoyed the experience.
- Students' social and cultural development is fostered through providing many opportunities for them to work together to find out about the lives of other faiths and cultures. Students were keen to talk about their plans for the next stage of their education and the useful work experience opportunities that had been set up by the transition manager.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding as attendance in some classes is sometimes low.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are well aware of the dangers of the internet and there has been appropriate training to help them keep safe and be aware of cyber-bullying.
- Students know about other forms of bullying and all were able to say who they would go to if they had any concerns. During the inspection, students said that there was typically no problem with bullying in the school.

## The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvements because students do not make the best progress that they can, particularly in writing. This is because students do not get enough chances to write. Often students are reluctant to write and teachers do not encourage students enough to persevere.
- In some subjects, for example in English, geography and history, students do not have clear guidance to improve. They often cannot see how the work that they are doing in class relates to a qualification.
- Marking and feedback in some subjects, including English, do not always provide sufficient guidance to students on how to improve their work.
- When students start at Southlands they have often been out of school for some time. Teachers are usually accurate in checking a student's basic skills and abilities when they start.
- In the primary department, good relations between teachers, learning support assistants and pupils enable all to settle down quickly to resume their learning. Parents really like the primary newsletters each

week. However, teaching does not foster sufficient opportunities for pupils to write.

- In many lessons teachers, support assistants and therapists work together to create a calm, purposeful atmosphere in which students can learn. Staff encouragement develops students' self-esteem.
- While some students commented that they found homework sessions of little benefit, others said that they enjoyed researching a subject in more depth on the internet, for example, using the time to develop poetry skills.
- The impact of teaching on mathematics and science achievement is more positive. Students are encouraged by teachers to try their best and challenge themselves. Students' work is usually clearly marked and there are guidelines on how they can improve. Students sometimes have the opportunity to comment on how easy or hard they found a piece of work.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Standards in writing across the school are low. There are not enough chances for students to write both in English and other subjects. Often students, particularly those who joined the school before their basic handwriting skills were developed, do not make fast enough progress. This has an impact on their progress in other subjects such as history and geography. Most students obtain English Functional Skills level 1 in Year 10. In Year 11, some take a GCSE and others take an entry-level qualification.
- Those who are more able do not always have work that meets their needs. They are sometimes put in for qualifications that are too low for their level of ability. For example, in information and communication technology, a student was doing a lower-level qualification when they were capable of working towards a GCSE.
- Standards and progress are stronger in mathematics and science than in English. Most students achieve between an A to D grade in their GCSE examinations. Two students last year took the mathematics exam a year early; one gained an A\* grade and the other gained a C grade. Usually, however, students take their GCSE exams at the end of Year 11.
- Evidence in books and folders shows that those students who are looked after, those who are day students and those who are disadvantaged make similar progress to their peers.
- Students usually make good progress in the additional options subjects that they study, including those that they study off site, such as motor vehicle and agricultural studies.
- Pupils in the primary department make better progress in mathematics, reading and science than in writing.
- Students make good progress in developing their skills in physical education. The extensive grounds and dedicated staff help them to become proficient in a variety of sports, including running, football and swimming. The Southlands adventure programme enables students to create their own fitness plans in sports such as canoeing and orienteering.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116564
<b>Inspection number</b>	446384
<b>DfE registration number</b>	850/6030

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School status</b>	Independent special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	53
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	1
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	39
<b>Proprietor</b>	Cambian Group
<b>Chair</b>	Susan King
<b>Headteacher</b>	Naomi Clarke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 November 2011
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£66,449
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£132,897
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