

Hartlepool School

Education and Vocational Training Centre

Unit E, Sovereign Way, Hartlepool, TS25 1NW

Inspection dates	20–22 January 2015
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Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Students make good progress from their different starting points.
- School records and inspection evidence confirm that teaching has been consistently good and students have achieved well over time.
- Teaching is well planned and teachers match work well to students' needs. It prepares them well for their next steps in education or employment.
- Students are proud of the school. They talk about how well the staff support them to improve, for example, their attendance.
- Staff consistently apply the school's effective behaviour management systems. This contributes well to helping students improve their behaviour.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural activities help students to improve their attitudes to work, and their respect for and tolerance of other people. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Students, parents and carers and local authority representatives confirm that students are safe in the school.
- The headteacher and teachers work very well together. They share responsibility well for the important tasks in improving the school, such as developing the curriculum. This has ensured the school maintains its good standards.
- The proprietor gathers performance information and uses it well to hold staff to account.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always provide the next challenge quickly enough for students to accelerate their progress even further.
- Opportunities for students to learn by solving problems for themselves are underdeveloped.
- Gaps in the training provided for staff by proprietors has limited them from developing the best teaching skills.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons and scrutinised samples of students' work in different subjects.
- Meetings were held with staff, including the headteacher and assistant director of Cambian Group, who manages the school.
- The inspector spoke on the telephone to a social worker, an education consultant appointed by the school and the managing director of Cambian Group.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included the school's prospectus, policies, information about students' progress and the school's own evaluation of its work. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- The inspector spoke to parents and carers and took account of four staff questionnaire responses. There were not enough responses to the online Parent View survey for these to be analysed.
- The inspector spoke to students and considered the pupil survey responses.

Inspection team

Jonathan Woodyatt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school occupies a small industrial unit in Hartlepool, adapted suitably as a school with classrooms, common room, workshop and salon. A fenced-off grassy area next to the school is available for use by students at break and lunchtimes.
- The school is registered to admit up to 24 students aged from 10 to 18 years. There are nine students currently on roll. There are no students on roll in the sixth form; this has been the case for a number of years.
- Students start in the school at different ages and at different times in the year. The majority start in Years 10 and 11. Most remain at the school until the end of Year 11. At the time of the inspection, the youngest students were in Year 9.
- All students have statements of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- There has been a change of headteacher since the last inspection. There have been a number of changes of proprietor and even more changes of staff employed by the proprietors to manage the school.
- The school is overseen by the assistant director who reports to the managing director.
- There are no alternative providers used by the school.
- The school was previously inspected in September 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding in order to raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that staff move students quickly onto the next tasks when they know what to do
 - providing more opportunity for students to undertake problem-solving activities.
- Provide more training opportunities for teachers to develop their skills.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are good

- The headteacher took over leadership in the school shortly after the last inspection. He has an excellent understanding of the issues faced by students who are placed at the school. He works tirelessly to meet their needs and fulfils the aims of the school well.
- The headteacher's commitment to students is fully shared by the small team of teachers. Together they ensure that students' different needs are met well. Comments made to the inspector by placing authority representatives confirmed how well students are doing with improving their behaviour, attendance and skills. Similarly, in discussion students unreservedly complimented the staff for the care and support they provide to help them succeed.
- The headteacher's actions are underpinned by a comprehensive self-evaluation process. Actions are well planned so that the school continues to improve. The headteacher has a clear and accurate understanding of how well the school is performing.
- The curriculum is increasingly helping students to develop their basic skills, such as reading, writing and mathematics. Students who arrive at the school with gaps in these skills, such as knowing sounds that letters make, are provided with effective individual tuition which helps them catch up well. This demonstrates the school's commitment to providing equal opportunity.
- Staff ensure that there is a wide range of subjects offered to students in order to prepare them well for their next steps. Students in Key Stages 3 and 4 study English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), construction, art, music, media and physical education. Older students can also study hair and beauty.
- Most subjects can be taken as GCSEs or as BTEC and Entry Level qualifications. Students receive helpful guidance to consider their next steps from staff and local authority workers. All students leaving at the end of Year 11 in 2014 successfully moved onto further education or training.
- Planning of activities ensures that a wide variety of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects are covered in the daily classroom activities and tutorial time. Students commented how regular individual discussions with staff helped them to explore and understand their own values and beliefs and those of others.
- There are planned opportunities for students to take part in residential activities, fundraising for local charities and educational visits. These include visits to local museums and to sports centres for physical education. This aspect helps to foster good relations with the wider community and contributes well to students' personal development.
- There are good opportunities for students to learn about other faiths, cultures and groups and explore life in modern Britain. For example, drugs are a topic in science and the British monarchy, Paralympic Games, pillars of Islam, and democracy and parliament are written about in English books. The school successfully promotes students' understanding of British values and tackles discrimination effectively.
- Staff receive training from the proprietor to develop their teaching skills. However, there has not been enough regular training to boost teachers' skills in order to provide the very best teaching and learning for students.
- Directors, managers and school staff have ensured that the school has continued to fully comply with the independent school standards since the last inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**

The managing director has a good understanding of the performance of the school. The assistant director provides the Executive Board with a wide range of information, such as the quality of teaching and the achievement of students. The directors meet monthly to keep themselves up-to-date with how well the school is improving.

The directors have put effective systems in place to monitor the standards of teaching and achievement, and ensure they are good. They can quickly identify if the standard of teaching dips. They hold the headteacher to account through his pay well. They recently sharpened the management of teachers' performance in order to make further improvements.

The directors ensure that finances are used well to provide effective deployment of staff. The classrooms have appropriate resources. Plans are in place to provide additional accommodation in order to increase the number of students.

The directors ensure that the school meets the required standards for safeguarding and have appropriate plans for improving accessibility at the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. From when they join the school, students make good progress in managing and improving their behaviour.
- Students have positive attitudes and are keen to learn. They enjoy the different subjects available and evidence in their folders and books reflects the pride that they typically take in the quality of their work.
- The school's systems for managing behaviour are well suited to the different needs of students and applied consistently by staff. Students explained to the inspector how eagerly they wanted to earn the rewards each lesson by achieving their individual behaviour targets.
- Students have plenty of opportunities to consider their own behaviour and are challenged well by staff to improve. As a result, students could explain to the inspector what they wanted to improve and how they were being helped by staff. Those who spoke to the inspector were resolute in wanting to make improvements.
- When students struggle to manage their own behaviour, staff respond well and implement the effective systems quickly. Records show that this has helped reduce the number of instances of misbehaviour over time. The school is looking at ways it can reduce these incidents even further.
- The school's work in developing students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural understanding helps them consider the consequences of their behaviour well.
- Students come to school regularly, a big improvement for many of them on previous attendance in other schools. Overall, attendance in the school is broadly similar to that in other schools. Students travel to and from school mainly by taxis, which helps them to be punctual.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Parents and carers, staff, placing authority staff and students all agreed that the school keeps them safe.
- Students told the inspector about how they keep themselves safe. For example, they were fully aware of the consequences of misusing the internet and different types of bullying. They said that they learn about these in their lessons, tutorial time and individual discussions with staff.
- Staff are very vigilant and skilled in managing students' individual behaviour needs well in order to keep them safe.
- The headteacher and proprietor ensure the school fully complies with its duties to carry out safe recruitment and to provide staff training in child protection and first aid.
- Fire safety equipment is checked regularly; fire evacuation drills are carried out termly and procedures are monitored routinely by the headteacher and proprietor.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching is good. Regular checking by the proprietors and external consultants confirms the school's records which show that teaching is good over time.
- Teachers ensure that learning is well planned and takes full account of the needs of students. Activities match their different needs well so students can make good progress. For example, in mathematics students benefited from individualised explanations provided by the teacher. In English, students read aloud different texts.
- Work in books and folders demonstrate the improving standards of presentation and skills students are developing in their different subjects. For example, work regularly includes opportunities to write and develop good literacy skills.
- Marking is carried out regularly by staff. They consistently write comments that credit students for what they have done well, as well as noting how they can make improvements. Consequently, this ensures that students are provided with clear guidance on how to make the necessary improvements in their work.
- Students who are struggling to make the necessary progress are helped by staff to catch up through individual sessions.
- Teachers regularly monitor how well students are learning during activities. They ask questions to check their understanding well and listen carefully to responses from students. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to move students on to the next tasks more quickly when they have understood what to do.
- There are not always enough opportunities for students to tackle tasks for themselves. This limits their development of skills to solve problems.
- Recently, staff have benefited from learning from staff in other schools in the group. However, over time

teachers have not been given enough training in order to boost their teaching skills.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most students start at the school with standards that are well below those of others of similar ages in schools nationally. Many students have missed considerable amounts of time at previous schools and have significant gaps in their learning.
- Good teaching ensures that students make good progress from their different starting points in all the different subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Consequently, they develop their knowledge and skills, such as reading, writing and communication, well.
- Students' attainment improves well throughout their time at the school, although by the end of Year 11 they leave with standards that are typically below those in other schools. However, overall they achieve well.
- Staff monitor how well students are learning and keep thorough records of this. They scrutinise the information regularly to identify any dips in students' progress. Staff provide individual sessions for students to help boost their basic skills, for example in reading.
- The school recognises that students' placements at the school can end before they reach the end of Year 11. Consequently, they have introduced an appropriate range of subjects which students can take and complete over shorter periods of time. These include the GCSE short course in ICT and Entry Level awards.

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.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	135424
Inspection number	454284
DfE registration number	805/6002

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	Day Special School
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Chair	Stephen Bradshaw
Headteacher	Paul Barnfather
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,000
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