

Cambian Somerset School

Creech Court, Mill Lane, Taunton, TA3 5PX

Inspection dates 24–26 March 2015

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

- The new headteacher, supported by the Cambian company senior leadership team who act as the governing body, have created a highly positive ethos for change and improvement in the school.
- All aspects of the school are carefully monitored so that leaders and managers have a clear and accurate view of the school.
- All students make good progress in English, mathematics, science and in their vocational skills. Students' personal and social development is good.
- Consistently good teaching in English and mathematics is stimulating students' desire to learn.
- Performance management systems are used effectively to ensure any underperformance is addressed. Training is used effectively to further develop teachers' skills.
- Staff and student relationships are excellent, and this helps to improve students' behaviour, which is good.
- All safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet statutory requirements and ensure that students and staff are safe.
- The senior leadership team ensures that requirements for the independent schools standards are met.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teaching is consistently good, not enough is outstanding, and so students do not make the fastest possible progress.
- Information on groups of students' progress is not always added quickly enough to whole-school systems. This means that, very occasionally, the senior leaders do not have up-to-date information on students' performance. This can result in planning for improvement being less effective than it might be.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended, and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a number of lessons, including art, humanities, English and mathematics, partly accompanied by the headteacher.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher and members of staff, and discussions were held with a number of students.
- There were not enough responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) to complete a meaningful analysis.
- The views of staff were compiled from the four replies to the staff questionnaire and from discussions held during the course of the inspection. Students' views were gathered through a series of individual conversations with the inspector. The school provided several documents that demonstrated the views of the local authority.
- The lead inspector looked at students' work during lessons and made a more detailed scrutiny of a sample of students' work over time. A number of case studies were scrutinised to review the work the school does to support its most vulnerable students.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including information on the progress made by students, teachers' planning and assessment. The inspector also scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, and a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cambian Somerset School is a mixed-gender school for students aged between 10 and 18. So far, the school has not had any students over the age of 16. There are currently 15 students on roll aged between 10 and 16, and all attend full time. The school caters for students who are in the care of a local authority.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social disabilities. Some also have additional complex difficulties that include autistic spectrum conditions and other cognitive disorders. All students are placed at the school by local authorities.
- At the time of the inspection the school did not have a website.
- The school is based in an old paper mill within an industrial park. The building has ample accommodation to cater for its current numbers and to cope with larger numbers as it expands to its full capacity.
- There is currently a relatively small staff team, with no middle leadership group, but all teachers take responsibility for a range of subjects.
- The school uses a range of local sports and outdoor pursuit centres to provide physical education opportunities, as well as their well-equipped sports hall that includes fitness machines.
- Students are not currently entered early for GCSE examinations. The school does not use any alternative placements.
- The school is not in receipt of pupil premium funding for those disadvantaged students who attend or the Year 7 catch-up funding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by using the current good-quality teaching in the school as a model for all teachers, and so raise the levels of achievement.
- Strengthen leadership and management further by ensuring that all information on students' progress is routinely added to the school's overall data system so that that leaders and managers always have current information on which to plan future school development.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported by the senior leaders from the Cambian group, who act as a governing body, have created a positive environment of improvement. This has resulted in students becoming more involved in learning, attending school regularly and having a positive attitude towards their learning.
- As the senior staff monitor all aspects of the school's work and the achievement of individual students, they have an accurate picture of the school. They use this information to further improve the school. However, due to some current school practices not all data regarding groups of students is added to the system quickly enough. This means that, occasionally, the senior leadership team does not always have fully up to date information about groups of students which means future whole-school planning is not always accurately targeted.
- There is no middle leadership team due to the small numbers of staff. However, all staff spoken to stated they felt part of the improvement process. All staff have high expectations for the students, which encourages them to do their very best and so achieve well.
- All teachers and the senior leadership team monitor each individual student's progress in English and mathematics. This ensures accurate planning for each individual student, which, in turn, results in good progress for all students.
- The curriculum is broad and well balanced, and rightly focused on developing key literacy and numeracy skills that prepare students well for their future lives. The school creates a range of effective opportunities for students to develop a good understanding of life in modern Britain. This is done through providing a wide range of opportunities to study British legal systems, welfare arrangements and visits to a range of religious and cultural centres. There is good provision for physical education using a range of off-site facilities and the school's own internal and external facilities. The school's curriculum provides a broad base for students' learning and the art, science and technology rooms enable a wider range of skills to be well developed.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and based on generally solid evidence from across all areas of the school. The company senior leaders regularly visit the school and ensure they always have an accurate view of the school but are aware that information relating to the achievement of groups of students is very occasionally not up to date. This means they are in a good position to support and challenge the school.
- Opportunities to develop the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Work across the school clearly shows that students have studied a wide range of cultures and religions. Discussions with students indicated a good understanding of British values. Visits to places of worship, local law courts, police stations and other community venues help to develop a good understanding of society in general and expectations of its citizens.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures fully meet current requirements. The named persons in the school and members of the governing body are trained to a high level. This helps students and staff feel safe in school.
- Procedures for monitoring and improving the attendance of students, including communication with parents and the local authority, are good, through regular reports and telephone conversations.
- Work-related and careers guidance is expertly provided by the local authority careers advisory service, who attend the school at least half-termly, and the students regularly attend their offices for further support.
- The headteacher and proprietor have ensured that all the independent school standards are met, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection.

■ The governance of the school:

The Cambian Group senior leaders make sure that all the independent school standards are met and well maintained.

Company leaders effectively hold all staff to account for all aspects of the quality of teaching and the progress of students, and ensure any underperformance is rapidly improved. This is closely linked to well-developed performance management systems. These are used to ensure that any underperformance is quickly rectified and that positive performance is rewarded and related to teachers' pay and progression.

Although, very occasionally, data are not placed on the central system quickly, the proprietor and senior leaders are well informed about how well each individual student is doing and how they compare to students nationally. They scrutinise information on individual students very carefully.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students enter the school with a wide range of behavioural difficulties which have resulted in them losing a considerable amount of learning. However, these students quickly settle into the school, understand the high expectations of them and, as a result, rapidly improve their behaviour. This leads to their attitudes to learning becoming positive. As one student stated, 'I like coming to school because the staff really do their best for me.'
- Students attend lessons on time, and behaviour around the school, on the playground, and while on external visits, is good. Students generally concentrate well in lessons and, where they do become distracted, staff are able to return them to learning rapidly.
- The average attendance of the students before entering the school was less than 50%, but the current school average is over 95%, which shows a marked improvement for the students. Attendance in the school is a little below the national average, but is rising rapidly.
- School records on behaviour are very thoroughly constructed and demonstrate a decrease in the number of disruptive incidents over time. This is due to the very positive staff and student relationships, which help to develop the students' confidence, self-respect and pride in their work. All work seen during the inspection was well presented and students stated that staff would not accept poor standards.
- All staff successfully provide opportunities to support the development of the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Students' confidence and self-esteem rises as they learn that they can achieve successfully in a range of subjects and vocational skills.
- The school has a range of policies and procedures in place that help make sure the promotion of extremism and political views is prohibited, so that all the independent school standards for this aspect are met.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Staff are well trained and the named persons in the school and on the governing body have had training beyond that normally expected. Several governing body members, for example, are NSPC trainers. This expertise helps to ensure that, not only do all policies and procedures fully meet all independent school regulations, but they are consistently applied by all staff.
- All staff appointments are made following rigorous checks to make sure of the suitability of all staff. All staff are trained in first aid and fire safety.
- Throughout virtually all lessons, the staff help students to understand how to stay safe and healthy, through reminders of e-safety, health issues and other social aspects. Students spoken to were able to explain how and why they need to be safe on the internet. They have a very clear understanding of the various types of bullying they might encounter and how they might deal with such issues.
- Risk assessments for all activities both in school and externally are robust. The senior leadership team and management group monitor these well and make sure they keep students safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- The consistently good teaching in mathematics and English has resulted in all groups of students making good progress. Teachers' planning provides a solid foundation for each lesson. It takes account of prior learning and the information they hold on the students' progress, which ensures that learning is well matched to the needs and abilities of each student.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. Students enjoy the challenges staff set. This was clearly shown in an English lesson designed to develop creative writing skills. Discussion with the students demonstrated that they felt highly challenged, but they also said they enjoyed this 'as it was not boring'. Marking is informative and enables students to know how to improve their work.
- All staff have good subject knowledge and use this well to make sure that students fully understand their work during lessons. For example, during a history lesson, the teacher carefully and fully outlined the skills and knowledge the student was going to learn. This enabled the student to make good progress during the lesson.
- Teachers deliver the curriculum effectively. This helps develop a good range of skills, knowledge and understanding, which provide a positive foundation for the students' future lives. The outdoor pursuit programme and cookery classes further enhance learning through the qualifications students gain.
- Teachers' questioning and discussion skills are used well during lessons to challenge and deepen the students' skills and knowledge.
- Teachers provide positive opportunities for students to study a range of cultures, religions and society structures, such as the legal and welfare systems. These result in them gaining a good understanding of

the diverse British society in which they live.

- Although teaching is consistently good, the proportion of outstanding teaching is not enough to raise students' achievement above that of good. This is due to the fact that the currently high-quality teaching already in the school is not used as a model for all staff.
- Through careful monitoring of all aspects of teaching, the senior leadership team and company leaders have ensured all the independent school requirements for teaching and assessment are met.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school having missed a considerable amount of education, which results in their learning being several years below that typical for their ages. However, consistently good teaching quickly helps to reverse this trend and ensures all groups of students make good progress in their English and mathematics skills.
- School information shows that disadvantaged students have made good progress from their starting points in line with that of their peers in school.
- Students' books and work around the school fully supports the school's information that progress to date has been good for all groups of students over time.
- Information on each student shows that they all make good progress in English, mathematics and science that is similar to their peers both nationally and in school. This is also used to ensure that any underachievement is quickly picked up and rectified through one-to-one support.
- Although attainment in the school is below national expectations, the school data, which has been carefully externally moderated, clearly shows that all students in the school are consistently closing the gaps on their peers nationally.
- Able students in school are successfully challenged by all staff. Their needs and interests are fully taken into consideration and this has resulted in these students making very rapid progress in all subjects. All are on track to achieve GCSE qualifications and have already reached Entry Level 3 qualifications in a range of key life skills subjects such as English and mathematics.
- The school has a strong emphasis on developing the students' personal, social and behavioural development. All staff do their very best to ensure every student makes good progress. As a result, all students rapidly gain confidence, self-esteem and have positive learning attitudes with a desire to succeed.
- Students confidently apply their skills learnt in reading, writing, speaking and listening to a wide range of situations and challenges set by the staff. Their English work shows an increasing confidence and fluency as their accuracy in mastering and using their skills grows. In mathematics, students confidently develop their calculation skills and can use a wide range of mathematical skills accurately in their daily lives.
- The school leadership ensures that all independent school regulations for this area are fully met.

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	131455
Inspection number	454261
DfE registration number	933/6211

The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended, and associated requirements.

Type of school	Special – Behavioural, emotional and social disabilities
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Headteacher	Joshua Fitzgerald
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£36,000
Telephone number	07918058294
Email address	joshua.fitzgerald@cambian.com

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