

Oakwood School

C/O Cambian Education, The Waterfront, 4th Floor Waterfront, Hammersmith Embankment, London, W6 9RU

Inspection dates

13–15 May 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

- Strong and decisive leadership has brought about many improvements in the school.
- The headteacher and her deputy have a clear vision and high expectations that are shared with all staff. This makes a particularly strong impact on pupils' behaviour.
- Despite disrupted learning in the past, pupils' behaviour is good overall. Good behaviour management ensures that pupils learn to control their behaviour and to be proud of their progress.
- Arrangements for keeping pupils safe while in school are good. Pupils feel safe and confident of support from staff.
- Teaching is good. High morale and determination among the staff team have brought about a culture where good teaching flourishes.
- Tasks are interesting and hold pupils' attention well. Pupils enjoy school.
- The subjects taught have been reviewed effectively to fully reflect current guidance. There is a successful focus on personal development that helps pupils overcome their social and emotional difficulties and develop their self-confidence.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Some pupils make rapid progress and almost all make progress in line with their age.
- Proprietors have strong and effective oversight and support the school well through regular reports and visits by directors and external consultants.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough emphasis is placed on teaching younger pupils the sounds letters make, so that some pupils do not know how to sound out words and letters when reading and writing. This holds back their progress.
- Work in mathematics does not always get the best out of most-able pupils in Key Stage 3.
- Checks on teaching do not always focus sufficiently on the impact on pupils' progress, so that teachers are not always clear how to accelerate progress.
- Work to ensure pupils arrive punctually to school has not been completely successful.

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

- Seven lessons were observed by the inspector. Four of these were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector carried out learning walks to observe pupils' behaviour and learning. Play times and handovers between the homes and school were observed.
- A wide range of pupils' work from each key stage was closely examined. The inspector listened to pupils reading and talked to them about their books.
- Meetings were held with a director of the management group proprietors, the headteacher, her deputy and the behaviour support and learning mentor who are responsible for pupils' welfare and safety, and staff. Discussions were held with pupils from Key Stage 2 and 3, and the inspector talked informally to pupils during and between lessons.
- A wide range of school documents were examined to check compliance with the independent school standards. These included the school's evaluation reports, monitoring by the school improvement partner, monitoring of lessons, appraisal of teachers, reports to carers, financing and safeguarding policies and documentation.
- There were too few returns from carers on the Ofsted website Parent View to be analysed. Results from recent questionnaires from the pupils' homes and from the pupils were examined.
- The inspector analysed questionnaires from 12 members of staff.

Inspection team

Kathy Hooper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a small school for boys and girls who have a statement of education needs as a result of their social and emotional difficulties.
- It was last inspected on 8 February 2012 when it was judged to be satisfactory, and a number of regulations were not met. A monitoring visit in July 2012 found the school had made good progress in addressing its weaknesses and all standards were met.
- Ownership of the school changed on 11 April 2014 to the Cambian Group, which also owns the children's homes.
- In July 2014, the school made a successful application to the Department for Education for a material change to admit up to 30 pupils.
- All of the pupils in the school have had a disrupted education and extensive periods of absence prior to them attending this school. The average length of their stay with the company is three years, dependent on individual needs. Pupils then re-enter mainstream education or transfer to alternative provision.
- All pupils are disadvantaged pupils, but not all of them attract pupil premium, the funds designed to support disadvantaged pupils. This is because of differences in funding between contributing local authorities.
- The groups of pupils are not large enough to allow comparisons of attainment between groups or to compare pupils' progress with national data.
- The pupils are predominantly White British.
- The vast majority of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. All have personal plans that address their individual needs.
- All pupils live in one of seven children's homes that are owned and managed by the same proprietors as the school. These are inspected separately by Ofsted and were not part of this inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- At the time of this inspection there were three classes, two for Key Stage 2 pupils and one for Key Stage 3. There were no pupils in Key Stage 1 or 4.
- The school changed its name in January 2015 from Flying High.
- Leadership of subjects and key stages is shared among staff and overseen by the headteacher and deputy.
- A new headteacher was appointed in June 2013. Since that time, the accommodation has been extended and enhanced.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching by
 - putting greater emphasis on helping Key Stage 2 pupils to read unfamiliar words and spell more accurately
 - increasing the challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics especially in Key Stage 3.
- Improve the leadership and management by
 - recording what pupils have learned in lessons during checks on teaching, to accelerate pupils' progress further
 - working with the pupils' residences to ensure all pupils arrive on time in the morning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Strong and informed leadership by the new headteacher has greatly improved the quality of teaching, learning and behaviour throughout the school. The headteacher and her deputy work closely with staff, both teaching and non-teaching, sharing good practice and agreeing high expectations for pupils' behaviour and progress.
- The senior leadership team has improved the achievement of pupils through regular checks of lessons, analysis of pupils' individual difficulties, and periodic reviews of their progress. All staff are well supported to improve. There are frequent checks on pupils' workbooks and close monitoring of their behaviour. Staff share leadership roles for English and mathematics. All managers and leaders, including those responsible for behaviour management, subjects, areas and phases, contribute well to the school's success.
- The proprietors have good oversight of the school. A director of the managing group and a school improvement partner visit the school regularly. They are challenging in their questioning and support the school well. Senior leaders have an excellent overview of the school as a result of their own checking and their discussions with others. The proprietors provide good opportunities for the senior leaders to work with others in similar schools.
- Staff have a good overview of all pupils and their special educational needs as outlined in their statements. Excellent records are maintained and there are productive relationships with outside agencies. The records of each pupil's behaviour, and additional special needs, are thorough and provide a reliable basis for discussing their academic progress.
- Morale among the staff is high and there are excellent relationships at all levels. All teachers and their assistants share the headteacher's vision and drive for excellence and strive to ensure the best provision for pupils.
- There is a good range of training and there are formal opportunities for teachers, and their assistants, to appraise their work. After visiting lessons, senior leaders give feedback that helps teachers to develop their practice. They do not always help teachers to appreciate the impact of teachers' actions on pupils' progress.
- The curriculum reflects current guidance and ensures pupils' reading, writing and mathematics are taught successfully across the curriculum. It provides pupils with a broad and balanced programme of activities, including creative and artistic subjects. There is a good programme of careers advice and guidance for older pupils. The programme extends pupils' awareness of career opportunities and is designed to raise their aspirations in terms of further and higher education.
- Lunchtime clubs provide opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of activities, such as computers, modelling, music, games and sport. These rotate each half term to ensure that pupils have varied experiences that help them to achieve well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and is evident throughout the whole school. Each lesson contains an intention to promote pupils' personal development. The principle of equality of opportunity pervades all the school's work. There are good opportunities to help pupils to appreciate British values of tolerance and respect. Pupils learn what democracy means and are helped to understand the rule of law. Discrimination is not tolerated.
- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Staff are appropriately trained and are very vigilant. They work closely with care staff in the children's homes, to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils at all times. Care staff are encouraged to support pupils' learning and well-being whilst they are in school.
- Communication with the pupils' residences is good. There are good systems for handover of pupils at the

beginning and end of the day. The views of the homes are collected and are positive, describing the award of certificates, the school's inclusivity, its communication, structures, and 'fantastic education' as strengths. However, because carers drop off other children from the homes at different schools, some Oakwood pupils arrive late in the morning.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance, since the new management group has taken over, is very effective. All policies have been reviewed and updated. All the independent school standards are fully met.

The managing director has a good overview of teachers' work and pupils' progress through weekly reports. There are regular meetings with other headteachers to share issues. There are frequent checks by the director and an external consultant who submit their findings to the managing director of the management group.

The accommodation is suitable, well-maintained and attractive. There are detailed reports on each pupils' progress every term that are sent to the pupils' homes. There is a comprehensive complaints policy and clear procedures for handling complaints.

Good systems for reporting on teaching and learning ensure the managing director is aware of the strengths and any underperformance among both teachers and pupils. The school has a clear and accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development. Directors are vigilant and reflective about compliance with legislation and are ambitious for the pupils' welfare and achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good because it is managed well. Consequently, there is no graffiti or litter, and the well-presented displays of pupils' work are respected by pupils.
- Pupils talk about 'their' school and are confident that the school will listen to their concerns. Any complaints from pupils are investigated thoroughly to ensure fairness for all. Feedback gained from pupils' questionnaires this year includes thanks and appreciation of the support from staff and reference to an 'amazing school'.
- Attendance for the vast majority of pupils is regular. Despite their previous poor attendance before entering the school, a growing number of pupils have full attendance records. Exclusions are short term and effective in dissuading aggressive behaviour. Pupils are brought to school by car from the children's homes. Occasionally, some arrive late at the beginning of the school day.
- There is little disruption of learning. Pupils deal with their high levels of anger and frustration very well. Pupils take advantage of opportunities to have time out when they feel unable to cope. They do this responsibly and usually return promptly to the classroom ready to learn.
- The school's good arrangements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils ensure that they become increasingly reflective, cooperative and tolerant of others. Aspects are reinforced in all lessons.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school despite their previous negative experiences and considerable gaps in their learning. They particularly enjoy activities that are relevant to their own experiences. For example, during Workshop Wednesdays they are involved in a range of activities. Key Stage 2 pupils were enthusiastic about 'up-cycling' materials they had found in charity shops to make door-stops. Key Stage 3 pupils were able to consider the meaning of democracy when discussing the recent election.

Safety

- The school's arrangements to keep pupils safe and secure is good. There are individual risk assessments as well as those relating to activities. There are good opportunities to discuss e-safety, bullying and racism through the personal, social, health and citizenship programme and through daily tutorials. Pupils say they are taught how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils say that bullying and racism are tackled firmly. The behaviour support and learning mentor ensures

consistent application of the behaviour policy. As a result, the number of incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying and racism, is reducing and pupils say that they feel safe in school.

- The school is vigilant about checking and monitoring visitors and insists on their awareness of safe procedures. Good oversight of each pupil throughout the day and close communication between staff ensures the safety of all and the encouragement to do the 'right thing'. There are high standards of safety awareness and management among staff.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Staff work well together to support pupils' learning. They plan work well to provide a wide range of experiences for individuals, based on pupils' personal targets, including those for their personal development. This helps pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers regularly mark pupils' work, helping them to recognise their strengths and areas for development. Pupils are encouraged to mark their own work in relation to criteria for success. Each pupil has a person centred plan that contains details of their strengths and targets, as well as their individual personal preferences and needs, and this helps staff to support each pupil's learning.
- Teaching assistants are experienced and skilful in supporting pupils with their behaviour and learning. All members of staff are well respected by pupils. Pupils have excellent relationships with staff and are grateful for their support. Homework is set regularly and pupils are excited when they bring in work from home of which they are particularly proud.
- Pupils' writing improves as a result of feedback and support from staff. Teachers make good use of whiteboards to check pupils' understanding. Information and communication technology equipment has recently been updated in some classrooms.
- Pupils try very hard in lessons and are proud to show their work to visitors. A group of pupils from Key Stage 2 concentrated extremely well when playing a series of pieces on the ukulele, following the notations, plucking the strings accurately, performing appropriate actions and keeping pace with others. This led to rapid progress.
- Teachers and their assistants assess pupils' work and their personal development regularly. They have a clear picture of those pupils who are under-achieving and those who are exceeding expectations. Support is provided for pupils who are falling behind or who miss work because of 'time out'. These records are used to set individual targets for pupils in English, mathematics and personal development.
- A new reading scheme helps pupils to identify their levels and they understand how to improve them. The school library contains a good range of books and pupils read regularly, often with school and care staff. However, teaching has not been as successful in helping some pupils understand how to sound out unfamiliar words.
- Progress data shows that pupils' achievement in mathematics has improved this year because the school has a wider range of resources and teachers have improved their planning. Staff explore pupils' difficulties well, for example, their preferred method of doing long division. Nevertheless, there is not always enough challenge for the most-able pupils in lessons.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Records show that, from their individual starting points, most pupils make good progress while in the school and are well prepared for re-integration into mainstream education. There is no difference in the progress of boys and girls.
- The proportion of pupils making good progress has increased this year compared with 2014. Variations in progress and the reasons for them are well understood by the school and are individually tracked.

- Pupils in Key Stage 2 achieve equally well in reading, writing, mathematics and science. In Key Stage 3, pupils' progress is not quite as good in mathematics and science as it is in English. The school is aware of the reasons for this and has taken appropriate action that is beginning to close this gap. No pupils are entered early for GCSE.
- Pupils improve their reading because they have regular opportunities to read to adults both in school and in the home. They enjoy reading, especially with adults. The range of books is appealing and pupils understand the organisation of the library. However, some pupils do not know how to sound out unfamiliar words when reading.
- The pupils' writing in their books shows improvement over time in terms of accurate use of punctuation and grammar, but sometimes their spelling is weak. Pupils write extensively and for different purposes and audiences. Some Key Stage 3 pupils are able to analyse how Tolkien builds characters in his writing with reference to Bilbo. Although most pupils' presentation improves, writing for others is clearly a struggle.
- In mathematics, pupils make best progress when the work is applied to familiar contexts as, for example, when working out annual allowances from a given weekly sum of two-digit numbers. When they worked out angles using a protractor, they applied their understanding of different kinds of angles successfully to their work on buildings.
- Regular therapy sessions and regular contact with the pupils' children's homes ensure that pupils quickly settle to learning in lessons and make good progress over time. Good behaviour management coupled with good teaching supports pupils' progress well. Many pupils are proud of the progress they have made in reading, writing and mathematics since joining the school.

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 GOV.UK website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	131033
Inspection number	462919
DfE registration number	893/6097

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	Special School for pupils with social and emotional difficulties
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Proprietor	Cambrian Group
Director	Stephen Bradshaw
Headteacher	Vicky Bates
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,806
Telephone number	01743 850840
Email address	education@cambianguroup.com;

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