

Cambian Whinfell School

110 Windermere Road, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 5EZ

Inspection dates

30 June 2015–2 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school

- Senior leaders have high aspirations for what students may achieve. They create an ethos in which all staff enable students to achieve ambitious targets.
- The headteacher and senior staff provide exemplary leadership, based on a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement.
- Students with complex emotional and social barriers to learning are enabled to make outstanding progress with their education and personal development.
- Senior leaders and staff ensure that each individual student has access to a range of excellent learning opportunities well matched to their starting points and abilities. Plans are under consideration to promote more fully opportunities for students to read for pleasure.
- Students respect the staff and respond positively to the high expectations set for their behaviour and cooperation. As a result, they make outstanding progress with the improvement of their attitudes and behaviour.
- Arrangements for safeguarding students are exemplary. All staff place a high priority on the assessment of risk and the creation of a safe environment for learning. Students state that they feel safe at school.
- Students are enabled to develop personal and social skills which equip them effectively to live independently or in supported independence on leaving school.
- Senior leaders ensure that all staff are well trained to understand the individual characteristics and needs of each student. The outstanding quality of teaching results from excellent planning to enable each student to achieve aspirational targets.
- Proprietors, through their effective governance arrangements, have an excellent understanding of the work of the school. They provide strong support for senior leaders and staff. They are well informed, through regular reporting arrangements, about the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Post-16 students are provided with excellent individual pathways, including access to GCSE and A-level accreditation, or suitable college courses.
- The school has good working relationships with outside agencies and other schools. Leaders have rightly identified extending these to help address the new requirements for the curriculum and assessment.
- Proprietors and school leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

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 students' learning in lessons across a range of subjects. A number of these lessons were jointly observed with a member of the school's senior management team.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the lead and assistant educational psychologists, and a number of members of staff and students.
- The views of parents were provided through telephone conversations. There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire for these to be taken into consideration. Responses to an inspection questionnaire completed by 13 members of staff were considered.
- A number of school policies and procedures, together with their implementation, were scrutinised in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. These included arrangements for assessment, safeguarding, health and safety, self-evaluation and development planning.
- The lead inspector viewed the school's website at the start of the inspection to check that a compliant safeguarding policy is available to parents, carers and others.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cambian Whinfell School is located in a large house on the outskirts of Kendal in Cumbria. The proprietorship of the school has been taken over by Cambian Education Services since the time of the previous inspection.
- The school is registered to admit up to 16 boys aged 11 to 19 years, with autistic spectrum conditions and associated complex barriers to learning. There are currently 14 students on roll, most of whom live in accommodation provided by the company. Four students are aged over 16 years.
- All students have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. Half of those currently placed at the school are in the care of their local authorities.
- The school's mission statement includes the 'aspiration for all of our young people to be equipped with the skills to fulfil their potential and be able to live happy independent, or semi-independent lives in the community...'.
- The school uses the services of alternative providers to provide part-time vocational opportunities for some students. A small number of current students are placed for part of their timetable with Kendal College and have vocational placements with a number of local employers such as Wildlife Oasis.
- The school's last inspection by Ofsted was in January 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the school's relationship with local maintained schools in order to enhance the school's development of revised requirements for the National Curriculum and GCSE accreditation.
- Extend the school's strategies to embed the development of literacy across the curriculum, including students' reading for pleasure.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are outstanding

- The headteacher and senior staff provide inspirational leadership. This is based on a commitment to ensure that all students achieve their potential despite significant barriers to their learning and personal development.
- Staff work as a cohesive team, with a shared vision and considerable expertise to implement their aims successfully. The school's vision is based on a firm and appropriate belief that all students can make outstanding progress in both their personal development and their academic learning.
- Throughout the school, there is an exemplary drive for continuous improvement. Senior leaders' analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development is based on robust, extensive evaluation. Staff work effectively together to devise innovative and creative responses to individual students' needs.
- Middle managers, including leaders of subjects and therapists, support each other in fulfilling their responsibilities thoroughly and to a high standard. As a result, students feel secure, well-supported and challenged effectively to succeed.
- Arrangements for the appraisal of staff performance are rigorous. They are based on suitable agreed targets, firmly rooted in the priorities in the school development plan. The school provides excellent training for all staff, including safeguarding and the management of behaviour. A number of staff have benefited from opportunities to develop their professional qualifications to meet the improvement goals of the school.
- Senior leaders ensure that the subjects, courses and experiences provided for students are kept under continuous review. Improvements are based on an excellent understanding of individual students' needs, including, for example, access to A-level courses for the first time for a small number of sixth form students.
- Initial steps have been taken to establish fruitful working relationships with local maintained schools. These have the potential to support staff in responding effectively to the demands of changing requirements in National Curriculum subjects and GCSE courses.
- Excellent, supportive arrangements are in place to support students attending alternative provision. Senior members of the school staff visit the providers and observe students at work. Reports in students' files demonstrate excellent attendance and engagement, and positive progress, by each student.
- Excellent attention is given to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. All staff ensure that students develop self-confidence and move continuously towards independence. Students are taught to understand the difference between right and wrong and to consider the consequences of their actions. Parliament week and a visit from their local Member of Parliament enable them to understand British values and their relevance to their daily lives.
- Students with a variety of autistic conditions are enabled increasingly to understand life in the wider community and how they can respond and contribute in a variety of situations. For example, they are provided with opportunities to visit the library, the fire station and places of worship in order to understand the importance of local community facilities.
- School policies and their consistent implementation promote equality of opportunity for all students. There is no discrimination in the aspiration and ambition evident for each student.
- The school meets all the statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection. The safeguarding policy has been checked on the school's website for compliance with paragraphs 32(1) and 32(1) (c) of the independent school standards.
- Leaders ensure that disadvantaged and vulnerable students achieve outstanding outcomes academically and socially. There are exemplary arrangements in place, in conjunction with placing authorities and students' families, to ensure suitable guidance for each student on transition to further learning and an appropriate level of independence.
- School leaders ensure excellent communication and joint working with local authorities, parents and carers. Parents, carers and placing authorities provide extremely positive feedback about the quality of the provision made for students and the positive impact on all aspects of their lives.

■ The governance of the school:

The company, through its governance arrangements, has an excellent understanding of the quality of teaching, the achievement of students and their progress towards independent living.

The directors hold the school to account for its provision and progress through an appropriate system of regular reporting. They are aware of the strengths in leadership of the school and value the quality of the headteacher's self-evaluation and plans for improvement.

There are appropriate arrangements in place to check on the work of staff and to ensure that exemplary performance is rewarded appropriately.

Senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met securely and demonstrate outstanding capacity for continued improvement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding and contributes strongly to their achievement.
- Students mostly enter the school with negative attitudes and complex emotional barriers to learning. Most have failed to engage in education successfully for a number of years and in some cases have been out of school for significant periods of time.
- The school enables each student to make a fresh start. Considerable effort is made by the teaching staff, strongly supported by a range of additional professional services, to create a successful individual programme of learning for each student.
- The staff set high aspirational targets for students' learning and personal development. They provide students with individual strategies and support to address their individual complex needs.
- Once they have adjusted to the expectations of the school, students respond positively to the opportunities provided. They make strong progress, often in small steps, to become reflective and understand how well they are progressing.
- Students take part willingly in a range of outdoor activities which they often find challenging. They learn to overcome their fears and uncertainties and to exercise greater independence in decision making.
- Alternative providers used by the school report extremely positively about the behaviour, attendance and attitudes of students placed on vocational courses. Students enjoy these opportunities and are keen to succeed.
- Parents, carers and staff are extremely positive about the development of positive behaviour and its impact on individuals and the ethos of the school.
- There is a relaxed and responsible atmosphere around the school, including at breaks and lunchtimes. Levels of staff supervision are high and students demonstrate appropriate respect and cooperation.
- Incidents do occur, particularly when individuals become stressed and do not immediately make the right choices. The staff are skilled at managing any incidents and ensuring that students remain safe and do not have a negative impact on the learning of others.
- Students' attendance is excellent and they make outstanding progress over time with the improvement of their behaviour and attitudes.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The school has produced a range of effective policies and procedures which are implemented in an exemplary and consistent manner.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are robust and meet statutory requirements. Staff are well trained to suitable levels in child protection, the management of behaviour and the administration of first aid.
- Students are taught appropriately about different forms of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. There are no incidents of bullying in the school's incident records.
- Suitable risk assessments are in place for all aspects of the school's work, both on- and off-site.
- Arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are exemplary and meet the requirements of the latest DfE guidance.
- All aspects of students' welfare, health and safety, including fire safety, are managed to a high standard.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching ensures that all students have the opportunity to make excellent progress with their learning.
- Staff show an excellent understanding of students' individual abilities and respond in an exemplary manner through the high quality of their planning. Students with severe communication difficulties, for example, are helped through picture exchange to enjoy and make progress in art. Staff respond with flexibility and good humour to students' various interests.

- The quality of teachers' planning is excellent. Individual learning styles and teachers' understanding of previous work are taken fully into account in preparing the next steps in students' learning. Students responded with interest, for example, when experimenting with the effects of changes in power on the efficiency of lightbulbs, or demonstrating their understanding of how to create and calculate the perimeters of various rectangles.
- Students demonstrate the ability to concentrate for sustained periods of time, for example when evaluating how quarries contribute both negative and positive impacts on society. Students consolidating their work in GCSE mathematics or preparing to study the subject at A level were provided with excellent opportunities to manage their own work and make independent decisions.
- Staff are creative, innovative and imaginative in finding a variety of methods to engage and interest students in their learning. They show a keen awareness of the need to help students understand empathy and how to interpret the feelings of others.
- Students in Key Stage 3, for example, entered enthusiastically into their interpretation of characters from *Beowulf*; they demonstrated effective ability to understand how to convey emotions through actions. Similarly, a further student showed empathy with practising Muslims fasting during Ramadan in locations with extended daylight.
- Students are helped to enjoy success in areas of learning which they may never have chosen willingly, such as tapping out an appropriate rhythm on a snare drum with varying volume and speed.
- Older students develop confidence and success to the point where they are prepared, for example, to express themselves through high quality descriptive writing or reading from a wide range of texts.
- The high quality of teaching of reading, writing, communication and numeracy ensures that students are increasingly well prepared for life after school.
- The school has made considerable progress with the improvement of students' literacy. Additional plans are under consideration for the further development of literacy consistently across all curriculum areas, including measures to support students with the extension of their reading skills.
- Staff, including teaching assistants working alongside teachers, demonstrate sensitivity and patience in responding to students' individual approaches to their learning. Key Stage 3 students, for example, were encouraged to each make a positive contribution when practising their recently-learned cricketing skills on a hot and humid day. All took an active part and learned from the experience.
- Teachers monitor students learning continuously through effective questioning. They intervene appropriately to re-direct students' learning and ensure that they are challenged to make sufficient progress.
- Staff assess students' progress effectively and regularly. Students' work is marked using whole-school agreed procedures and students are continuously made aware of how well they are doing in achieving their ambitious individual targets.
- Information from regular checks of students' achievement is recorded centrally and used effectively to judge whether each student is making or exceeding expected progress.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students enter the school with mostly negative previous experiences of education. In many cases, their school placements have broken down and families have been overwhelmed by the challenge of finding appropriate provision.
- Most students enter the school with assessed levels of attainment which are well below those expected for their age. Previous expectations for their academic achievement and social development have often been very low.
- The school is successful in turning around students' personal expectations and greatly improves their future life chances. Most students make outstanding progress with their learning from a wide variety of starting points.
- The majority of students achieve external accreditation across a wide range of subjects and courses. A number of students who left the school in the last three years achieved success in GCSE examinations, including some significant achievements at or above grade C.
- The proportion of students exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics, from their various starting points, is high compared with national figures. The school sets highly aspirational targets for the rate of progress of students of all abilities and students respond positively to these.
- A small number of students with complex special educational needs and very low starting points make excellent progress with their learning and social development, despite their attainment remaining well below average. A small number of students with very low starting points and severe communication

difficulties make excellent progress as a result of outstanding teaching and individual support.

- Current students in Key Stage 4 and post-16 groups are mostly on target to achieve a range of GCSE awards, together with vocational qualifications in information and communication technology. Individual students have already achieved level 1 or 2 qualifications in additional practical areas such as home cooking, animal care and outdoor education.
- The school admits only a small proportion of more-able students, most of whom have under achieved previously. These students make outstanding progress, achieving higher grade awards at GCSE, including English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged and vulnerable students work with confidence because of the trusting relationships they develop with staff. Their achievements exceed expectations and they make strong progress towards closing their gaps in knowledge and understanding compared with other students nationally.
- All recent leavers from the school have been successful in taking up places in colleges of further education or making a successful transition to independent or semi-independent living.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Post-16 students typically enter with levels of attainment below or well below expectations for their age.
- As a result of gaps in their education and previous difficulties adjusting to the social demands of school, students require additional time to make up lost ground and to close gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- Post-16 students have, to date, been taught in teaching groups alongside Key Stage 4 students and have made excellent progress with their learning. They respond well to opportunities to study appropriate academic courses, demonstrating perseverance and self-discipline in their attitudes to work.
- Three students in the current Key Stage 4 group are now preparing to start GCE A-level courses in mathematics and creative writing at the school. These are planned to run alongside college vocational courses and further preparation for the transition to adult life.
- All post-16 students take part in a study programme which includes an effective vocational element and independence skills. Recent students have achieved success, for example, in level 3 ICT courses, a level 2 diploma in animal care, and accreditation in motor vehicle mechanics.
- The quality of teaching for post-16 students is outstanding. Students' social skills benefit, where appropriate, from working alongside Key Stage 4 students. Teachers demonstrate exemplary patience and resilience in helping these students achieve more than they or their families had considered possible.
- The post-16 provision is extremely well managed, including excellent integration of learning and personal development opportunities between school and students' homes.

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	134781
Inspection number	463008
DfE registration number	909/6054

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	4
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Chair	Stephen Bradshaw
Headteacher	Huw Davies
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2012
Annual fees	£76,000–£205,000
Telephone number	01539 723322
Email address	huw.davies@cambianguroup.com

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