

Cambian Potterspury Lodge School

Potterspury Lodge School, Potterspury Lodge, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 7LL

Inspection dates 2–4 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Staff know pupils exceptionally well. Pupils are kept safe and their progress is promoted well because staff take the time to understand the individual needs of all pupils.
- The incredible setting of the school, its grounds and clever use of space create an excellent environment for learning.
- Teaching is consistently good across all subjects and year groups.
- Staff quickly identify any additional support pupils need because they make regular checks on progress.
- The sixth form provision is highly personalised for each learner. This results in good preparation for the next stages of education, employment or training.
- Leaders know the school well. They have an accurate view of strengths and areas they would like to improve.
- The proprietor robustly holds the executive headteacher and other leaders to account for the progress pupils and learners make and for the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' personal development is planned into all that the school does. This is complemented well by group sessions focused on social thinking.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good because activities engage their interest.
- Pupils achieve good outcomes in a broad range of subjects in relation to their starting points.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching over time is not yet outstanding.
- Leaders have not developed clear systems to check the behaviour, safety and progress of pupils and learners who access off-site provision.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make outstanding progress by:
 - providing pupils with sufficient time to complete tasks
 - ensuring teachers ask questions that pupils understand clearly and help them to make the best possible progress
 - providing activities and tasks that fully engage all pupils.

- Further enhance the quality of leadership and management by:
 - improving the range of professional development activities available to staff, including the best teaching practice from within the school and across the Cambian Group
 - adding more clarity to the systems already in place to monitor the behaviour, safety and progress of pupils and learners when attending alternative provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- All leaders demonstrate a determination to provide a high-quality education for pupils. They are very proud of the school and care deeply about their colleagues and pupils. Leaders' work since the last inspection has helped the school to develop and improve outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement across the school. At the start of this inspection, the executive headteacher and the headteacher stated that the school was good. The inspection process confirmed all that they already know.
- Since starting in September 2015, the executive headteacher has quickly established effective relationships with staff and pupils, which have enabled her to energise the school further. The executive headteacher has credibility with staff and students; she demonstrates the same level of passion for improving the school as the staff team do.
- Performance management arrangements for staff are of a good quality. Targets for staff clearly link to the improving progress of pupils, whole-school priorities and the personal development of individual staff members. This helps staff to focus on school improvement.
- Over the course of many years, senior leaders have promoted a culture which has resulted in the staff team supporting each other exceptionally well. One teacher described their colleagues as 'amazing people'. This comment was typical of how the staff talked about each other. The positive and supportive culture at Cambian Potterspurty Lodge School means that pupils have every opportunity to flourish.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Respect for each other, tolerance of differences, the democratic process and the rule of law are all embedded into everyday life at the school.
- The spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils is supported through planned units of work across various subjects and through regular assemblies. The lively food technology teacher had decorated her cookery room with Chinese posters and artefacts. This supported the pupils' acquisition of knowledge about Chinese New Year alongside the development of their cooking skills.
- Leaders take every opportunity to improve the social development of pupils. They have enabled the speech and language therapist to have time to teach pupils to help to improve their social thinking skills. Staff then support this work during break times, lunchtimes and while out on educational visits.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum contains an appropriate balance of subjects. Pupils develop their skills and knowledge in a wide range of areas because the topics taught within each subject are well thought out.
- Staff access a range of professional development activities during meetings and training days. This helps them to improve their teaching and support for pupils. The Cambian Group has recently ensured that all staff access a suite of online training materials. Face-to-face training in the protection of children has enabled staff to have a good level of knowledge of how to keep children safe. Leaders and staff recognise that there are some missed opportunities to share the best teaching practice across the school and across the Cambian Group.
- Leaders do not have all the information they need to assure themselves of the behaviour, safety and progress of pupils at off-site provision. The current systems are over-reliant on individual staff and the goodwill of providers. The inspector found no evidence that pupils were at risk when on placement off-site; however, leaders accepted that the systems should be improved.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Director of Excellence in Care and Education from the Cambian Group acts as the key link between the proprietor and the school. The director ensures the effective performance management of the executive headteacher. Regular dialogue between the two colleagues ensures that the school is held to account for the work it does.
 - The current director is new to post and at the time of the inspection she was in attendance on the school site for only the third time. The director is starting to get to know the school well and has quickly established a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses across the provision.
 - Since taking over the running of the school, the Cambian Group has made a significant investment in the upgrading of the residential accommodation. This has been completed to a high standard and has resulted in residential pupils feeling valued and appreciative of the space in which they sleep and spend some of their leisure time.

- The director and executive headteacher accept that the change of ownership last summer caused significant anxiety for some parents and staff. They both accept that the Cambian Group needs to ensure that parents and staff are fully informed about any changes and the future direction of the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that policy reflects the latest government guidance and that staff are well informed about how to respond if they have a concern about a pupil or colleague. Staff are well trained in behaviour management and how to assess risk. Pupils and learners state that they feel safe at school and while on off-site visits.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good because over time pupils' experiences in lessons lead to good outcomes. Teachers use accurate assessment of pupils' abilities to plan engaging lessons, which leads to pupils making good progress.
- Teachers use the space in their classrooms and around school well. Most of the time pupils have access to individual desks, which allows them good opportunities to focus on their own work. Classrooms are set out well; this maximises the attention of pupils and helps them to learn.
- The subject knowledge of teachers is very good. Most teachers deliver their specialist subjects to small groups of pupils. The teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects, combined with good resources, usually leads to the good progress of pupils.
- Pupils start at Cambian Potterspurty Lodge School at different times throughout their school career. The school makes sure that pupils are settled into new routines and their emotional well-being is acknowledged when they first arrive. Teachers then check individual pupils' skills and knowledge in each subject area. This information informs teachers' planning and supports the improving progress of pupils.
- Teachers use the targets found in pupils' statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans to inform their teaching. Pupils have individualised targets in each subject and teachers are usually clear about what they expect pupils to learn during each lesson. Teachers use regular assessment well to inform the next steps of learning for each pupil. This attention to detail means pupils receive a good-quality education based on their individual learning needs.
- Leaders and teachers think carefully about the allocation of teaching assistants to support pupils in lessons. Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils do not become over-reliant on particular teaching assistants by making sure a variety of staff work with different pupils. The inspector observed teaching assistants offering just the right amount of help to individual pupils. They are able to do this because they know the pupils so well. An on-call system of extra support staff means that pupils are able to take five minutes out of lessons if they need to manage their own behaviour. The skill level of these staff members results in pupils rarely being out of class for more than five minutes. Therefore, pupils get back to their work quickly.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are very good at using the school's reward systems. The consistent application of these rewards results in good attendance in lessons, punctuality and pupils' hard work.
- All pupils' written work is marked. Teachers follow the school policy and ensure that there is clear feedback to pupils about what they have done well and how to make their work even better. The inspector found excellent examples of where this feedback from teachers had resulted in improved work in pupils' books.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well with the occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and clinical psychologist to ensure that therapy programmes are supported throughout the school day. Due to the respectful relationships between education, residential and health staff, the pupils benefit from a school which aims to recognise all their needs, not just academic progress.
- Where teaching is not as strong, as the best pupils are rushed to complete tasks, the questioning by teachers to pupils is vague and learning activities are not as engaging as they could be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The staff teams' work in this area strongly supports pupils' academic and social progress.
- Pupils often start the school after periods of turbulence to their education. Pupils' emotional well-being is supported well through the period of settling into the school. Staff create a nurturing and caring environment where pupils feel listened to. From this starting point, pupils are enabled to make good strides in their social and emotional development. Teachers use the daily tutor time well to address any immediate emotional concerns that pupils may have. This means each school day gets off to as good a start as possible.
- Pupils' self-confidence is developed well during their time at the school. Older pupils described to the inspector how they had been very shy when they first started school, but they now have friends and take part in a variety of activities in the community. All pupils have access to residential outdoor education, which includes activities such as caving. Pupils' confidence is clearly boosted by these experiences and supports them to be confident in other situations.
- The highly skilled speech and language therapist supports staff to develop pupils' self-awareness through social thinking groups. These taught sessions enable pupils to better understand their own behaviours and the effect on others around them. Over their time at the school, pupils improve their understanding of themselves.
- Pupils' physical well-being is promoted through good systems for the management of medicines and effective links with on-site and external health colleagues. Staff take into account the health needs of pupils when planning learning activities.
- Pupils are aware that discrimination and bullying can take many different forms. They understand what cyber and homophobic bullying are. They feel safe in school, and the work they do in lessons on a range of health and social issues helps them keep safe outside of school.
- Staff from the school and at the alternative providers work together to ensure the safety of pupils. On a tour of one alternative provider, learners told the inspector how to keep safe in a workshop environment and what they would do if they had any concerns about their own safety or that of their friends. Leaders recognise that the formal systems for checking the behaviour, safety and progress of pupils at alternative providers need to be improved.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Despite the high level of anxiety which could be displayed by pupils, the school is an orderly and calm environment. Pupils' conduct in lessons is very good and most use the five minute time-out sessions independently to avoid becoming distressed.
- Pupils look after their school environment well. The stunning buildings and grounds, which are well maintained by staff, help pupils to take pride in their school. Pupils also take pride in their work books and folders. These are well looked after and demonstrate how seriously they take their work.
- The attendance of pupils is generally good or excellent. Pupils enjoy coming to school and appreciate the support they are given by the staff team. A few pupils struggle with their attendance and the school works hard with families and local authorities to try and improve this.
- When pupils attend alternative provision their behaviour is generally very good. Alternative providers are able to contact the school for support if they need it. Staff report that pupils' behaviour is exceptionally good during off-site visits, such as a recent train journey to go shopping in Birmingham city centre and during regular skiing holidays in Italy.
- Effective systems are in place to manage challenging situations of very poor behaviour. There are a reducing number of incidents which result in physical intervention by staff. These incidents are recorded properly by staff and pupils are always given the opportunity to feed back to adults about the incidents and how they were handled.

Outcomes for pupils **are good**

- In relation to their starting points, pupils generally make consistently strong progress in all subjects and in all year groups. This is because teaching usually takes into account pupils' individual learning needs.
- The most-able pupils do particularly well in mathematics and English. Where the most-able pupils' talents and particular interests are identified, they also make good progress. These areas are harnessed well by staff; for example, last year the school taught GCSE astronomy for the first time to cater for individual needs and talents.
- The school's effective baseline assessment system allows teachers and leaders to measure progress against national expectations in all subjects. The outcomes for pupils are good because teachers and leaders carefully consider how best to support individual pupils to make the best possible progress.
- Standards of attainment are improving year on year, which is an indication of an improving curriculum and an examination offer that challenges pupils further. There is an increasing move by leaders to ensure that all pupils are entered for the right level of qualification at the right time. This promotes improving outcomes.
- The inspector scrutinised many examples of pupils' work, completed since September 2015. Pupils' work in books demonstrates good progress over time. Verbal and written feedback to pupils allows them every opportunity to succeed and make good progress.
- There is no discernible difference in the outcomes of any particular group of pupils. Pupils from a disadvantaged background or those looked after by a local authority do as well as others.
- The school has a very strong track record of ensuring that pupils are successful in the next stage of their education, employment or training. In summer 2015, all the pupils who left the school went to college or into paid employment.
- The well-stocked library and reading time in tutor sessions mean that pupils read widely and often. The development of pupils' reading skills enables them to access other areas of the curriculum with confidence.

Sixth form provision **is good**

- The sixth form provision is well led by the head of post-16, who demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of 16–19 study programmes and a clear vision for how the department should operate. Senior leaders are fully supportive of his work.
- Learners continue to access good-quality independent careers education and the sixth formers act on the useful guidance provided earlier in their school life. This is provided through the Northamptonshire Connexions service and provides pupils and their families with the information they need to make good decisions about the future. This work is complemented by the school's knowledgeable sixth form staff team at Cambian Potterspurty Lodge School, who help to guide and support learners to make appropriate decisions about their next steps.
- Learners continue to benefit from good teaching in the core subjects of English and mathematics. This enables learners to develop the necessary skills they need to access challenging courses at local colleges and after they leave school.
- Leaders have ensured that all learners follow an accredited programme, which helps them develop the social interaction and non-academic skills needed to cope in a larger college or work environment. Learners and staff described to the inspector how sessions had been taught about how to meet new friends and how to behave appropriately at lunchtimes in large college environments.
- Work experience for learners is built into the sixth form programme at an appropriate point for each learner. Flexibility is applied to this part of the study programme so that it meets the individual learners' needs at the right time, rather than simply undertaking this experience as a token gesture. Many learners develop a good work ethos and enjoy the opportunity to try a new activity during work experience.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use the assessment information provided by staff from lower down the school to plan a challenging course of study for individual learners. These courses take into account the personal aspirations of learners.

- The personal development and welfare of learners in the sixth form is taken as seriously as in the 11–16 part of school. Staff support learners to become responsible citizens and take increasing control over their lives. Learners are kept safe because staff ensure that plans for learning activity are well thought through and any risk is assessed and acted on.
- During the inspection, the behaviour of sixth form learners was very mature. They demonstrated a pride in their achievements and in their school. They are delighted to have been supported so well by the school. However, they are concerned that promises made by leaders to improve the internet connection to the school have not been fulfilled. This concern was echoed by a few parents.
- Learners' outcomes are good because all learners access an individualised and challenging study programme, which results in successful transition to the next stage of education, employment or training. The most-able learners are catered for well; for example, the school is providing an AS level in history.

School details

Unique reference number	122136
Inspection number	10008939
DfE registration number	928/6039

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	Independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Number of part time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	8
Proprietor	The Cambian Group
Chair	Nadine Williams
Executive headteacher	Lise Sugden
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,223 – £67,777
Annual fees (boarders)	£77,759 – £135,544
Telephone number	01908 542912
Website	www.cambiangroup.com/ourservices/service/home.aspx?id=196&s=15
Email address	mail@potterspurylodge.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 June 2012

Information about this school

- During the summer of 2015, the school was taken over by the Cambian Group.
- The last standard inspection took place in June 2012. The school was also subject to a progress monitoring inspection in April 2013.
- Cambian Potterspury Lodge is an independent residential special school. The residential provision was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2014 and was not the focus of this inspection.
- The school caters for pupils with autism, including those with Asperger syndrome and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school uses Cycle Saviours, Urban Farm, Foundation House, Milton Keynes College, Moulton College and Northampton College to provide parts of some pupils' and learners' education.
- The executive headteacher took up her post in September 2015 and is also responsible for the education of pupils at Cambian Bletchley Park School. The Principal, the headteacher and deputy headteacher all work full time at Cambian Potterspury Lodge School.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place over two and a half days. The inspector visited nine lessons and held meetings with the Director of Excellence in Care and Education from the Cambian Group, the executive headteacher, the headteacher and deputy headteacher throughout the inspection. Meetings were also held with representatives from the teaching and teaching assistant team.
- The school's Principal was absent from work throughout the inspection.
- A formal meeting with five pupils and learners took place on the last day of the inspection. The inspector met with the chair of the school council. The inspector spoke with several other pupils throughout the inspection.
- The inspector undertook several tours of the school site, including the residential accommodation. The inspector met with the acting head of residential care.
- Meetings were held with the clinical psychologist and speech and language therapist.
- Sixteen responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) were considered.
- Twenty-two responses to the staff survey were scrutinised by the inspector.
- The inspector visited one of the alternative providers to check on how well the school ensured pupils' and learners' good behaviour, safety and progress.

Inspection team

Phil Harrison, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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