

Cambian Devon School

Intek House, 52 Borough Road, Paignton, TQ4 7DQ

Inspection dates

10–12 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Until recently, school leaders and the proprietor have not acted swiftly enough to address the shortcomings in the quality of education provided by the school.
- School leaders do not have an accurate enough understanding of the progress that pupils make from the point that they enter the school.
- Over time the school's aspirations for pupils' achievement have been too low. Too few pupils achieve the qualifications of which they are capable.
- The progress of pupils who attend off-site alternative provision is not monitored closely enough.
- Leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively.
- Teaching does not consistently challenge pupils to achieve, whatever their starting points. It does not pay sufficient attention to what pupils already know, understand and can do.
- While attendance is improving, some pupils are persistently absent and this is slowing down the progress they make.
- The small number of learners in the sixth form make inconsistent progress in their achievement and personal development.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has already made substantial improvements to the quality of the education provided by the school. He has a clear and realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He is now receiving effective support from the proprietor.
- Under the new leadership, pupils in the school are making better academic progress than in the recent past.
- Pupils often arrive at the school with a history of disrupted education. The school provides an environment in which they can begin to succeed.
- The behaviour of most of the pupils has improved noticeably in the time the new leadership has been in place. The number of exclusions is falling, as is the number of occasions when pupils' challenging behaviour means staff need to use reasonable physical intervention.
- Pupils' personal development is improving. They demonstrate increasing pride in their work and better engagement with their learning.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are good. Staff know the pupils and their individual needs very well.
- The school meets the independent school standards.

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 leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that school leaders have a more accurate view of pupils' starting points when they join the school and how much progress they have made since then
 - monitoring the quality of teaching more effectively by placing a greater emphasis on the impact of teaching on the progress pupils are making over time
 - monitoring more closely the outcomes and personal development of those pupils and learners who attend alternative provision for all or part of their education.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve so that more of them go on to get appropriate qualifications that reflect their ability and prepare them better for the next stage of their education, employment or training
 - use more accurate assessments of what pupils know, understand and can do to plan lessons with an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils, whatever their starting points.
- Improve the attendance of those pupils who are persistently absent to ensure that they make better progress in outcomes and personal development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- In the recent past, the school has suffered from a period of weak leadership and management. This meant that the progress pupils made and their behaviour were not good enough. The proprietor, in turn, did not act swiftly enough to address this situation, which compounded the shortcomings in the education provided by the school.
- By contrast, the new headteacher has acted quickly to address these shortcomings and the quality of education provided to pupils has improved since he took up his post in January 2016. He has a clear vision for a learning community based on aspiration and achievement. Some of the initiatives he has introduced, however, have not had sufficient time to have significant impact. Nonetheless, behaviour has improved and as a consequence pupils are in a better position to make academic progress, which many are now doing.
- In the past, leaders' expectations of what pupils could achieve were too low and pupils were often not entered for qualifications appropriate to their ability. As a consequence, pupils underachieved. This approach has now changed and the headteacher is successfully establishing a culture of aspiration among both pupils and staff. The progress pupils make is improving as a result, but it is not yet good.
- These low expectations were often compounded by the absence of an accurate assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do when they enter the school. The school is addressing this as a priority and has a new system which will not only be used with new pupils but is already giving leaders a clearer understanding of pupils' current abilities.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, whether by observations of learning or checking pupils' work, has been a weakness in the past. School leaders understand this and have established a new programme of monitoring. Nonetheless, the process is in its infancy and it is too early to say what impact this programme will have.
- A number of pupils undertake part or all of their education off-site in alternative provision. They are accompanied to these placements by a member of staff from the school and, as a consequence, their attendance and behaviour is closely monitored. When it comes to their academic performance, however, the school does not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the progress that pupils make. Similarly, school leaders' knowledge of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in alternative provision is incomplete.
- Pupils often arrive at the school after a much-disrupted education and the school rightly focuses on ensuring that they attain key skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils do, however, follow a broad and balanced curriculum which helps them acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of subjects. In addition, the school adjusts pupils' timetables very effectively to cater for pupils' individual needs, particular interests and future plans. As a result, the curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully by the school. Assemblies make an important contribution to this process. One assembly at the start of the day, for example, focused on the upcoming Olympics in Brazil and effectively wove together strands about other cultures and equality.
- The headteacher has made a number of improvements to the school buildings and they provide pleasant places in which to learn.
- The headteacher and proprietor have a good understanding of the independent school standards and have ensured that these are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Until recently, the proprietor had not acted effectively to address the shortcomings in the education provided by the school. This contributed to the slow progress that pupils made and their poor behaviour.
 - The new director of education for Cambian Group, however, has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is now providing effective support to school leaders, along with the regional executive headteacher. Together with the new headteacher, the proprietor is now focused much more tenaciously on school improvement. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of education provided by the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding policy complies with all the relevant legislation and follows all the guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education. The single central record of checks on the backgrounds of teachers and other staff is thorough and well maintained. Staff confirm that they have all received training in safeguarding and child protection, which is updated

regularly. They have all received and read the first part of 'Keeping children safe in education', July 2015, as part of this training. The majority of staff have received training in restrictive physical intervention (restraint). In addition to all this, school leaders are developing a culture of safeguarding which puts the welfare of pupils at the heart of everything the school does. Recent revisions to the format of individual pupils' risk assessments provide staff with detailed information about pupils, although there is some work to be done on ensuring that these are consistently updated.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Historically, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not been strong enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. As a result, pupils have not achieved as well as they might.
- Teaching is not securely based on an accurate understanding of what pupils already know and can do. As a result, some work that pupils do is not set at the appropriate level and does not present them with a suitable level of challenge, whatever their starting points. The overall result of this is that teachers have not had high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. New processes to assess the abilities of both current and future pupils give a more accurate picture of pupils' abilities. This system is currently in its early stages, however, and has not had time to make a significant impact on improving teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers plan lessons reasonably well but time is sometimes used inefficiently and learning slows as a result.
- When teachers provide pupils with information about what they do well and how to improve their work, they make progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Not all teachers adopt this approach, however, and pupils make slower progress as a consequence. Similarly, teaching does not yet give sufficient opportunity for pupils to review their work and to learn how to develop it further.
- Given the particular needs and educational backgrounds of the pupils, teaching is appropriately focused on improving pupils' reading, writing, communication and mathematics. This is sometimes effectively linked to the skills pupils will need in future life, such as handling money or applying for a job.
- Homework does not feature as a significant part of pupils' learning. This is largely a consequence of the particular circumstances and needs of the pupils that the school caters for; the priority is rightly to re-engage them with work in school first.
- The school provides parents with detailed reports of their child's performance. Comments from teachers in these reports show that they know their pupils well as individuals. On the other hand, information about how their child is progressing is undermined by the fact that the school's information on pupils' starting points lacks accuracy.
- Most teaching at the school is done on a one-to-one basis because of the particular needs of the pupils. Relationships between pupils and staff are good and pupils are encouraged to work with positive attitudes. When teaching is closely linked to pupils' interests, they become noticeably more engaged and behaviour improves.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils often enter the school with low levels of self-esteem after negative experiences in education up to that point. The school works hard to improve their belief in themselves and tries to foster in them a more positive attitude to learning. With some pupils this is having a marked effect on their levels of engagement with their education. With others, however, progress in this area of personal development is slower.
- At the end of the school day, pupils attend 'praise assemblies' where staff members talk about the positive features of each pupil's day. This has an important impact on pupils' personal development as many enter the school with very low self-confidence and are reluctant to accept praise. These assemblies also help to foster the sense of the school as a learning community, which is important as much of the teaching takes place on a one-to-one basis.
- Pupils' understanding of what it means to be a successful learner is developing. They are learning to take

more pride in their work and this contributes to their personal development.

- Pupils receive independent and impartial careers information, advice and guidance from an appropriate external agency.
- Those pupils who attend alternative provision, which is tailored to their individual needs and interests, make good progress in their personal development while they are at these placements.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils enter the school with a range of special educational needs or disability, including many with social, emotional and mental health problems. All pupils have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. Pupils are at the school because they have not thrived in mainstream education and they have often displayed very problematic behaviour.
- The new headteacher has set very clear expectations about appropriate behaviour. Initially, pupils took a while to adjust to the new boundaries and fixed-term exclusions rose. Over a relatively short time, however, behaviour improved noticeably and the number of exclusions is now relatively low. Similarly, the occasions where staff have felt it necessary to use restrictive physical intervention (restraint) have dropped dramatically. Staff say that behaviour is now much better. Over time, therefore, behaviour has improved and most pupils are now better prepared to engage with their education than before.
- Some pupils, however, have still not managed to improve their behaviour and as a consequence are currently not able to make progress in their education.
- Attendance for most pupils has also improved in the last few months, but the school recognises that it has more work to do with a number of persistent absentees to ensure that they access the improving education offered by the school.
- The new reward system, DICE (determination, inspiration, courage, equality), is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Pupils respect the school's environment and the various displays that enhance the classrooms and corridors.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils enter the school after disrupted educational experiences and a few have not been receiving any meaningful education for some time prior to their entry. They often join the school part way through the year and relevant key stages. As a result of all this disruption, pupils are often working at much lower levels than pupils nationally of similar ages and abilities when they arrive.
- Nevertheless, as a consequence of institutionally low aspirations and inconsistent teaching, many pupils have historically made poor progress. Over time this meant that pupils did not enter for qualifications at levels appropriate to their abilities and underachieved as a consequence. This situation is improving and the school is moving towards an approach to examination entry which is commensurate with pupils' abilities.
- Observations of pupils' learning and extensive scrutiny of their work show that the progress for current pupils has improved in the last six months and, overall, pupils are making better progress than in the past. This is particularly clear in mathematics but is also the case in English. Despite this, variabilities in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school mean that outcomes are similarly variable. Some pupils' work demonstrates quite rapid progress in recent months, particularly in the key skills that form the bedrock for further progress. For others, however, the pattern of progress is less consistent and consequently requires improvement.
- For a number of pupils who join the school after long periods of education where they have made little or no progress, the improvements they are currently making represent a considerable achievement. These improvements make a significant contribution to their self-esteem and overall personal development. For many it is the first time they have succeeded in education.
- Outcomes in alternative provision are also improving, although the picture is less clear here due to deficiencies in the school leaders' monitoring of progress in these providers. Nonetheless, it is clear from talking to pupils and examining information on destinations that the alternative provision is helping pupils to plan for and move into the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The school has a very small number of learners currently in the sixth form. This has also been the case in the past. Sixth form learners usually do all or a substantial amount of their studies at alternative providers.
- School leaders do not monitor the achievement and attainment of learners in the sixth form closely or often enough. As a result, they do not have an accurate picture of the progress that these learners are making.
- Information on the destinations of learners once they move on from the sixth form shows that most go on to appropriate education, employment or training. This shows that they are making some progress in personal, social and employability skills.
- Those learners who did not achieve a grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics are on courses appropriate to their abilities in these subjects. These courses help them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and make a good contribution to preparing them for their next steps.

School details

Unique reference number	135803
Inspection number	10008891
DfE registration number	878/6213

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
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Chair	n/a
Headteacher	Michael Rees-Lee
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,300
Telephone number	01364 644824
Website	www.cambiangroup.com
Email address	education@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	25 November 2015

Information about this school

- Cambian Devon School is owned by Cambian Group. The school provides education on two sites in Paignton and Buckfastleigh.
- Cambian Devon School is a small special school which caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. A number of pupils also have autistic spectrum conditions. All pupils are placed at the school by local authorities. Six pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- All pupils currently on roll have either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses four alternative providers: Combe Pafford School, Exeter College, the Breakthrough Trust and On Track education.
- The last standard inspection took place in on 6–7 February 2013. The school had an emergency inspection on 25 November 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning on both the school sites in the company of the headteacher. In addition a selection of pupils' work was examined.
- The inspector observed pupils arriving and leaving school and during break and lunchtime.
- The inspector had meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the director of education for Cambian Group, who represented the proprietor. He also spoke informally to pupils and staff during the inspection.
- A wide range of documentary evidence was scrutinised, including the full range of the school's policies. Documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also checked, as were the school's records of the checks it makes on teachers.
- In making his judgements the inspector took into account two responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, and the record of one telephone call made to Ofsted. There were no responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Stephen Lee, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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