

Southlands School

21 September 2016

Vicars Hill, Boldre, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 5QB

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)

- The school makes appropriate arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
- Staff know the needs of pupils exceptionally well. Strong relationships between staff and pupils, and between the pupils themselves, underpin the strong safeguarding ethos of the school.
- During the inspection, Her Majesty's Inspector observed staff working closely with pupils to keep them safe and to facilitate a bespoke curriculum that is tailored to their interests. Staff work hard to encourage pupils to re-engage with learning.
- The school maintains detailed records about staff, in line with statutory requirements. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that staff who work with pupils are suitable and have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe.
- All staff receive appropriate training to enable them to carry out their roles; newer staff are supported well by more experienced staff. All staff complete training online; the school maintains a detailed record of staff training. Staff have undertaken detailed training designed to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to specific safeguarding issues such as gang culture and child sexual exploitation.
- Temporary supply staff and volunteers are briefed in child protection procedures and their wider safeguarding role during induction. This includes procedures to follow in the event of a safeguarding disclosure by a pupil.
- The school's safeguarding policy is published online. School leaders have already taken account of the most recent government legislation published earlier in September, particularly in their duty to promote the welfare of pupils.
- The designated safeguarding lead is acutely aware of the school duty to inform the local authority designated officer (LADO) if concerns or allegations are raised that relate to adults that work or volunteer at the school. Records show that reports are made in a timely way and recommendations given to the school are followed closely. When appropriate, this includes thorough investigations. The school keeps meticulous records relating to all safeguarding incidents.
- The LADO confirms that leaders report concerns appropriately and is confident that leaders have a secure understanding of safeguarding procedures.
- Leaders have fostered an open culture of vigilance to safeguarding practice. Staff say that they feel comfortable and confident to share concerns relating to pupils and

colleagues. They know what actions to take should safeguarding concerns relate to the headteacher.

- A code of practice is in place for all staff which outlines the high standards of behaviour expected from them. Leaders investigate and take any action necessary if these standards are not upheld. Pupils on work experience placements from other schools read the code of practice as part of their induction.
- Staff are acutely aware of the code of practice with regard to their professional conduct. They are adamant that leaders investigate and pursue allegations and concerns with rigour.
- Staff say that leaders are supportive and listen to their views. They feel that the recent admission of girls to the school has been managed well, and the focus on managing pupils' relationships has paid dividends and is aiding this transition.
- Staff assert that pupils are safe, one going on to say that they 'wouldn't want to work in a place where pupils were not safe'.
- Leaders are tenacious in following up safeguarding concerns and regularly attend meetings, as required. Records are highly detailed, transparent and kept diligently.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe. Pupils receive a useful 'pupils' guide' that explains how to protect themselves online. The school filters and monitors pupils' use of the internet. The designated safeguarding lead is also the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) champion and actively promotes e-safety. Pupils access Poole Streetwise Programme run by Dorset County Council to learn how to be safe in the community. For example, pupils role play stranger danger scenarios and learn about issues relating to inappropriate texting.
- Pupils enthusiastically told the inspector of the many ways that the school has made a difference to their lives. Pupils say that they are increasingly able to manage their behaviour and are more tolerant of others. Pupils enjoy learning, when they previously did not, and have re-engaged with education.
- The entrance to the school is secure and controlled by key pads to prevent unauthorised access. Staff and visitors known to the school are encouraged to challenge people without identification. Visitors and pupils attending the school on work experience placements are supervised at all times.
- School leaders work hard to ensure that pupils attend school as often as they are able. They have a good understanding of pupils' vulnerability to risk when they are not in school. Leaders pursue any concerns they have regarding pupils' safety relating to attendance with local authorities that place pupils at the school.
- The school works very effectively with other agencies to protect children. In addition, pupils are supported by on-site specialists, such as a clinical psychologist and occupational therapist. Hence, the school is able to offer a holistic approach to pupils' care.
- The school has a positive approach to managing pupils' sometimes challenging behaviour. The school upholds its aim 'to provide a nurturing environment that encourages young people to flourish intellectually, socially, emotionally and spiritually'.
- The school support pupils' personal growth in such areas as communication skills, life-skills, self-awareness and building positive self-esteem. This helps pupils to build healthy attitudes towards themselves, others and their future lives.
- Displays around the school demonstrate the opportunities pupils have to build positive relationships and grow as responsible citizens. They learn about the rule of law through their own school rules and through visits to the Crown Court.

- Transition arrangements are well managed. The school hosts staff from pupils' future educational settings so that they gain a better understanding of pupils' needs and strengths. Risk assessments and relevant safeguarding information are communicated between placements to ensure a smooth onward journey.
- The school offers pupils a range of accredited outcomes to ensure that they are able to continue to build on their qualifications beyond school. These include an extensive range of GCSEs, functional skills, ASDAN qualifications, Sports Leaders Award and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Paragraph 16

- The school's risk assessment policy is to be read in conjunction with the school's health and safety policy. The policy provides clear guidance relating to control measures and evaluation of whether a level of risk is acceptable. A useful 'calculator key' gives guidance for whether an activity should proceed.
- The school undertakes detailed risk assessments specific to pupils' needs and vulnerabilities. Risk assessments clearly identify strategies to manage and reduce risk, including proactive interventions.
- School leaders ensure that all pupils on roll at Southlands School who go off-site on work experience placements have completed the British Safety Council Award. As well as an overarching risk assessment of work experience placements, the school completes thorough checks on potential providers.
- New placements are visited by the transition manager, and if verified as suitable, Hampshire County Council complete further risk assessments, including a check that liability insurance is in place. Risk assessments seen by the inspector were completed thoroughly and cover areas such as supervision, induction, fire evacuation and what to do in the event of an accident. Depending on the needs of the pupil, the placement may be escorted by a member of staff from the school or a daily handover undertaken between the school and the provider.
- Pupils under the age of 16 who are placed at the school to undertake work experience are supervised at all times. Pupils of this age work alongside primary-aged pupils in the school. Leaders have implemented a clear programme of induction and recognise the importance of shared risk assessments between the placing school and themselves.
- Leaders proactively seek ways to improve their practice. The school's risk assessment policy is currently being revised to ensure that practice and procedures are even more secure.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii) and 33(k)

- The school's complaints policy is in writing and available on the school's website. In addition, parents are able to request a copy of the complaints policy.
- Leaders implement the school's complaints policy effectively. It is the inspector's view that the school dealt with the incident that led to the complaint appropriately.
- The policy sets out a clear timeframe for the management of complaints. The school has adhered to this timeframe in the vast majority of instances. In the two instances when this was not the case, there were specific reasons pertinent to those complaints

which slowed the process of dealing with the complaint.

- The complaints procedure facilitates consideration of complaints on an informal basis which can become formal should the complainant be dissatisfied. The policy states the requirement for formal complaints to be made in writing. Leaders acknowledge complaints when they are received.
- The complaints policy makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed on behalf of the proprietor, consisting of three people not previously directly involved with matters detailed in the complaint. The proprietor ensures that one person is independent of the management and running of the school.
- The policy clarifies that parents can be accompanied by as many people as they would like during a panel hearing.
- When a hearing before a panel has been required the proprietor has ensured that appropriate proceedings have been undertaken.
- Where recommendations have been made relating to concerns raised in a complaint, school leaders have responded proactively by implementing improvements to their practice. Leaders are analytical, responsive and reflective and consequently procedures to protect and promote pupils' well-being are strengthened.
- The policy stipulates that findings and recommendations are shared with the complainant and the person complained about.
- Complaints records, held by the school, are detailed and information and correspondence is chronologically logged. Records were available to the inspector while on the school premises. These records evidenced the due regard given to complaints by leaders, and the written responses provided to complainants, including pupils, that record and addresses the concerns raised.
- Pupils are given a voice through the school council, which promotes pupil advocacy. Posters displayed throughout the school provide pupils with information about how to make a complaint. Pupils are also given contact numbers for external agencies, such as ChildLine.
- Pupils have access to an independent listener who visits the school on a monthly basis to gather pupils' views about the school. Pupils report that they know who to go to if they are concerned about anything, and that they would be taken seriously. They also believe that school staff would take effective action to support them, should the need arise.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- The quality and impact of the school's leadership and management skills are effective. The welfare, health and safety of pupils in areas explored during this inspection have continued to be well met since the last inspection. Leaders strive to protect pupils in their care, learn from weaknesses identified and ensure that pupils have equality of opportunity.
- Because all of the preceding independent school standards checked in this inspection were met, the standards in Part 8 are also met.
- The school's website provides information, policies and publications which are solely compiled by the proprietor. School leaders are currently unable to access their own websites to personalise and amend policies themselves. Any addition to the website is

made through the proprietor. This has affected leaders' ability to immediately reflect changes to practice and procedures. The proprietor and school leaders are currently working alongside each other to provide leaders with access to their own website, with the aim to improve personalisation of policies so that they better reflect the specific needs of the school and the pupils in their care.

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 that were checked during this inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	116564
DfE registration number	850/6030
Inspection number	10022330

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 residential and day pupils
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	7–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	5
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders	26
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Karen Gittins
Annual fees	£136,000 to £200,000
Telephone number	01590 675 350
Website	www.cambianguroup.com
Email address	education@cambianguroup.com
Date of previous standard inspection	19–21 November 2014

Information about this school

- Southlands School is an independent special school for day and residential pupils.
- It is located in Lymington and provides education for pupils from a number of local authorities.
- The residential provision provides care for more than 295 days, so the school changed its registration to a children's home (SC482294).
- The school was previously registered to admit 110 boys. However, the school successfully applied for a material change to be co-educational. There are currently four girls at the school.
- There are 50 pupils, of which 26 board. The school is registered to take pupils from age seven to 19. There are currently five pupils above the age of 16.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs related to autistic spectrum conditions. All pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education and some have had considerable periods when they have not been in school, prior to attending Southlands School.
- The majority of students are White British.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2015, following a period of interim acting headship by the deputy headteacher.
- Cambian Educational Services has been the proprietor since 2004.

Information about this inspection

- The emergency inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education following a parental complaint. This complaint specifically related to leaders' implementation of the complaints policy. The following independent school standards were considered: Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 16, welfare, health and safety of pupils, Part 7, the manner in which complaints are handled, and Part 8, the quality of leadership and management of the school.
- The inspection was conducted without notice.
- The inspector carried out a learning walk visiting every class and year group.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, one of whom is also the designated safeguarding lead, the transition manager, and teaching and support staff from both education and the children's home.
- The inspector spoke to the LADO by telephone to ascertain his views of leaders' response to concerns and allegations.
- The inspector spoke to the chief executive officer of Cambian Group to discuss issues relating to the complaint.
- The inspector also met with a group of pupils of primary and secondary age and discussed their views of the school, particularly their views about safety, and pupils' knowledge of how to share concerns, and how well they are prepared for the future.
- A range of policies, records and documents were scrutinised, including those published on the school's website. These included safeguarding records, referrals to the LADO, complaints made to the school, and risk assessments including those pertaining to work experience placements.
- The school's policies and procedures to keep children safe were also examined.

Inspection team

Abigail Birch, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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