

# Cambian Walnut Tree Lodge School

## Inspection dates

4–6 October 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	Good
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

- School leaders and the Cambian Group have not been prompt enough in addressing problems in the quality of education.
- The proprietor does not meet the independent school standards for leadership and management, and teaching in relation to pupils not yet making good progress.
- Standards in the school are now improving but outcomes are not yet good.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not been routinely monitored.
- Assessment of the progress that pupils make has not, until recently, been tracked methodically and systematically.
- Expectations for pupils' achievement have not been consistently high enough.
- Teaching does not consistently provide sufficient challenge. It does not take full account of pupils' achievement prior learning.
- Sixth-form students are subject to the same variability in the quality of provision as younger learners.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has brought about significant improvement in a short time. The evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses is accurate.
- Support from the Cambian Group through its director of education is much improved.
- Recent initiatives have improved the progress pupils make.
- The quality of care of pupils is good. Pupils start to enjoy their learning and become more ambitious. They behave well.
- The school's curriculum provides a good range of cultural experiences, for instance on themed days, so that pupils' personal development is promoted well.
- Pupils' attendance has improved when compared to their attendance prior to joining the school.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that the school leaders have an accurate view of pupils' starting points on joining the school and that their progress is continuously monitored and assessed
  - maintaining close monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and ensuring that all evaluations are made with close reference to the standards being achieved by pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - providing professional development to ensure that teachers have the right knowledge to deliver all courses to a good standard
  - ensuring that the level of challenge provided by teachers to pupils is consistently high, including for the most able pupils, and takes full account of their prior learning
  - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve so they are consistently high
  - providing information technology (IT) resources of a good standard to support teaching and learning.

### The school must meet the following independent school standards:

- The proprietor must ensure that teaching at the school
  - enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught
  - shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- After the previous inspection, the school had a series of four headteachers, each leading for a short period of time until the role was assumed by the present leader in June, supported by a lead teacher. A further teaching appointment was then made. Previously, the school was unable to recruit and retain sufficient qualified staff.
- Key requirements of the previous inspection report with regard to actions to improve the quality of education were not carried out. Furthermore, there was a lack of clarity with regard to the status of the school. When it reopened after a ten-week closure early in 2016 and modified the type of social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils on which it was focusing, leaders considered it to be a new school. This assertion was not correct and reflected inadequate knowledge of formal processes of registration. There has been a change to catering exclusively for girls that has not been notified to the Department for Education (DfE). This lack of clarity is indicative of past weak leadership and management.
- The headteacher, with the active and informed support of the director of education of the Cambian Group, has made rapid progress in implementing essential improvements. These are shaped by a clear vision for raising achievement and raising expectations of both staff and pupils. The vision pays close attention to the specific needs of pupils in this setting. However, the historical delay in acting on the requirements of the previous inspection report has meant that the changes now being pursued have not yet had time to make sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.
- The school's current leadership are raising expectations of what pupils can achieve and broadening available accreditation. This is having a positive impact on progress but it is not yet good.
- Professional training for staff had been insufficiently developed until the initiatives of the school's new leadership. Opportunities for training are now improved, including those available to teaching assistants, but too recently for their benefit to be reflected in the quality of teaching.
- Assessment of pupils' progress has not been systematic or rigorous enough. The tests pupils completed were recorded but no information was collated that offered full detail of pupils' progress. Staff had not recognised the importance of high-quality assessment, particularly in relation to pupils' disrupted schooling prior to attending this school. Teachers now assess pupils' levels on entry accurately and more comprehensively, but the system has not yet had time to be fully embedded or used routinely to inform the planning of teaching.
- School leaders identified a crucial weakness in the quality of the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment. A programme of improvement has been implemented but is at an early stage. Taking full account of pupils' progress in the evaluation of teaching is not yet established.
- The IT system in the school provides very unreliable connectivity. This limits teachers' ability to draw on additional resources and increases their workload because they routinely create back-up 'hard' copies of materials to minimise the disruption to teaching.

The poor IT provision curbs the scope of pupils' studies and has a negative impact on their progress.

- Given the extensive gaps in pupils' basic knowledge and skills on arrival, leaders appropriately prioritise achieving improved attendance and focus on the acquisition of fundamental literacy and numeracy skills. Because the additional time for literacy and numeracy is integrated into planning other subjects, the curriculum remains broad and balanced. There is, for example, due attention to learning in science and the humanities.
- Personal, health and social education is given a particular emphasis because of the additional needs of pupils. It develops pupils' skill in making informed choices in life decisions. Increasingly, teachers' planning builds in elements that extend pupils' knowledge of expectations for life in modern Britain.
- School leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, and social and cultural development well. The risk assessments made for each pupil often place appropriate limitations on the external visits and trips that may be taken. However, the school provides additional on-site experiences, such as theatrical productions and themed international days. These broaden pupils' cultural understanding and appreciation of diversity.
- The headteacher and director of education have ensured that the independent school standards are met, apart from those that relate to pupils' good progress.

### **Governance**

- The previous proprietor did not respond sufficiently to the requirements of the previous inspection report. Priorities for the development of the school and increasing the rate of pupils' progress were not tackled. Consequently, much lost ground has had to be made up following the appointment of the current senior team.
- The current director of education for the Cambian Group, relatively recently appointed, has worked closely with the headteacher to fashion a vigorous improvement programme. Together with the lead teacher, this senior group has created a school development plan that has accurately diagnosed weaknesses and has, in a short time, proved an effective guide to initiating improvement.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's policy takes full account of current guidance. The policy is not published on a website but is readily available for all who need to access it.
- Checks when recruiting and appointing staff are thorough. Members of staff are given appropriate training when first appointed and this is refreshed and updated regularly. Staff know the contents of the first part of 'Keeping children safe in education'.
- Risk assessments for individual pupils are undertaken and are an effective guide to inform the practice for teachers and teaching assistants.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Requires improvement**

- Over time, teaching, learning and assessment have not been of high enough quality to ensure that pupils made good progress. Recent improvements are having a positive impact but have not yet had the time to raise standards sufficiently.

- Assessment information about pupils' achievement available to teachers is still too limited. Assessment focuses on recording modules of work completed. More detailed assessment records were not collected until recently and are still being developed with regard to their accuracy and scope. Consequently, teachers are not able to plan on the basis of a full understanding of how securely pupils know and understand different concepts. Given the complex educational histories of pupils and an unevenness in their attainment on entry, the extent to which achievement information is partial has limited the amount of challenge that teachers offer to pupils. Assessment is now improving but has not yet been developed to the point where teachers are able to take full account of prior learning.
- Pupils who require a higher level of work do not consistently receive it promptly enough. This reflects limited teacher knowledge in some parts of the curriculum. Teaching in IT, for example, is not able to answer pupils' more demanding questions. While additional staff are now engaged to provide extra specialist teaching, for GCSE history for example, pupils all complete the same range of tasks to begin with. This occurs even where prior information suggests a difference in attainment. The situation is improving rapidly, but the right match of work to pupil is not achieved quickly enough. This limits the progress of the most able pupils, who repeat too much prior learning.
- Skills in literacy and numeracy are given suitable prominence in teaching, although the extent to which they are linked to practical contexts is variable.
- Teachers plan learning efficiently to accommodate pupils who have erratic attendance. Staff work assiduously to reintroduce habits of full attendance and positive attitudes to learning.
- Computers and other equipment needed for IT are not of a good standard.
- The school provides weekly reports for carers. The reports give a clear evaluation of attendance and attitudes to learning but are too general with regard to their account of educational achievement. A narrative is given of work covered but it is not sufficiently evaluative about exactly how well pupils have done.
- Homework is set regularly and is efficient in reinforcing classroom learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school works effectively to promote positive attitudes to education. Pupils rediscover pleasure in learning and enjoy completing homework tasks.
- Carers confirm that pupils joining the school make gains quickly in the way they approach their learning. They grow in understanding of how to become a successful learner. They become more confident in planning for their future education, employment or training. They respond well to their personal, social and health education lessons and become more cautious and considered in how they approach potential risks.
- A range of leisure options offer pupils choice in physical activity. Combined with healthy eating options offered in food technology, pupils are encouraged to appreciate the value of healthier lifestyles.

- Pupils are aware of the different forms that bullying can take. They have an understanding of how they should respond to it. They have confidence in the ability of the adults around them to solve problems.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils join the school with educational histories that include a high degree of oppositional behaviour and frequent exclusion from school. The school encourages pupils to resolve disputes rationally. They respond positively to the calm behaviour modelled by adults in school.
- Behaviour in classrooms is typically good. Exclusion from school and physical restraint are rare. Pupils have an understanding of strategies so as to withdraw themselves from confrontational situations.
- Conduct during the inspection was typically respectful of staff. The inspector was welcomed by pupils and they were happy to discuss their school with him. They spoke confidently about their learning and were clear about ways in which they had been helped to improve the control of their own behaviour.
- Pupils appreciate the social areas made available to them and they take care of them properly. Classrooms and wall displays are well cared for.
- Pupils' attendance increases during their time in the school, often markedly so against attendance prior to joining.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Requires improvement**

- Typically, pupils join the school with educational histories that show severe disruption. This frequently includes non-attendance for extended periods. Consequently, initial assessment often shows regression from previously attained standards because pupils have forgotten earlier learning or practised it insufficiently. Testing shows that almost all pupils are functioning with knowledge and skills well below that of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils take a range of modular tests and some have achieved success in improving from their starting points. However, records show that the modules are not always balanced in composition. Some pupils have achieved almost exclusively in terms of modules reflecting social accomplishments. Pupils were not building academic and vocational knowledge and skills in a well-balanced way that prepared them for the next stage in their education or training.
- Evaluation of the learning and work of current pupils shows that they are making improved progress on courses that emphasise English and mathematics. Progression towards GCSE qualifications is now a realistic possibility, although limitations in teaching and assessment mean that pupils' progress is not yet rapid enough.
- The re-engagement in education that is often achieved is a significant step forward for the large majority of pupils whose prior education has been fractured or disrupted. A significant positive contribution is made to their personal development.

## Sixth form provision

## Requires improvement

- There is a very small number of students in the sixth form. The typical stay is brief because the school seeks an early transition to college provision for most learners.
- Provision in the sixth form is close in character to that in the rest of the school. Teaching is often individual or is conducted in small groups, including different year groups.
- Students' progress has not been sufficiently rapid because teaching does not take enough account of prior learning. As for the school as a whole, assessment of students' progress is not yet fully developed. The level of challenge is not consistently high, particularly for the most able.
- Advice and guidance to sixth-form students is thorough in identifying future options for education and training. Students are given effective support when beginning college attendance after leaving the school.

## School details

Unique reference number	135990
DfE registration number	822/6014
Inspection number	10020928

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Proprietor	C/O Cambian Education
Chair	Chris Strong, Director of Education
Headteacher	Paul Stevens
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,000
Telephone number	01234 772125
Website	<a href="http://www.cambiangroup.com/cambiangroup.aspx">www.cambiangroup.com/cambiangroup.aspx</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:education@cambiangroup.com">education@cambiangroup.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	3–5 December 2013

## Information about this school

- Cambian Walnut Tree Lodge School is owned by the Cambian Group. At the time of the previous inspection, it was owned by Advanced Childcare Limited.
- All pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. In April 2016, it changed from providing for a mixed intake to catering solely for girls, but this has happened without the agreement of the DfE.
- None of the pupils currently on role have either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.



- The previous standard inspection of the school took place on 3–5 December 2013.
- The headteacher supervises another school as well as Walnut Tree Lodge. A lead teacher deputises at all times when the headteacher is not present.

## Information about this inspection

- Learning was observed and work for both current and past pupils scrutinised.
- Pupils were observed in social times as well as in lessons.
- The inspector met with the director of education for the Cambian Group, the headteacher, the lead teacher and all members of staff. Informal conversations were held with members of staff and pupils.
- The inspector analysed a broad range of documentation. This included the school's policies and records with regard to achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- No responses were received to Parent View or the staff and pupil questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Paul Copping, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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