

The Forum School

Shillingstone, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 0QS

Inspection dates

29 November–1 December 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor has not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. Provision, including in the sixth form, is inadequate.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are not met. The safeguarding policy is not appropriate. The school's attendance register is not accurate.
- The risk assessments undertaken of young people and their needs are not sufficiently robust. The school admits some pupils for whom it cannot support the welfare in the longer term.
- When the school can no longer meet the needs of a pupil they are not swiftly transferred to a provision that can. This compromises the safeguarding of the young person and others.
- Pupils' behaviour is not effectively managed or recorded. Some pupils require extensive physical restraints, adult physical intervention and extended periods of restriction of their liberty in order to keep them safe.
- Reports to parents sometimes present a more positive picture of a young person's experience at school than the internal records show.
- Teachers, and their assistants, do not discuss what pupils need to learn, particularly at the start of the school day. This hampers their ability to reflect on and use the assessments they have made to be able to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress.
- Homework does not build upon what pupils have learned during the day. It is not used to target an individual pupil's learning needs to help their personal development and well-being.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils, including sixth form students, who are appropriately placed, thrive and do well in all aspects of their learning and personal development.
- Harmony and respect for others are actively promoted.
- The use of therapists, specialist teachers and the range of the curriculum offered are strengths of the school's on-site provision.
- Leaders, managers and other staff are deeply committed to making improvements.

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?

- Urgently improve the quality of safeguarding by ensuring that:
 - risk assessments are more robust so that only those pupils that the school can fully support are accepted
 - the safeguarding policy is kept up to date and is specifically tailored to the school
 - records of physical interventions conducted by adults contain sufficient and accurate details so that the type and duration of such interventions are clear
 - the school's attendance register accurately records the attendance of pupils.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - when the needs of a young person on the school's roll change, a risk assessment is speedily completed; if the school can no longer meet their needs, the school must work robustly with the placing authority, and others, to ensure that the young person is swiftly placed in another provision that can provide the appropriate support
 - reports home to parents provide a full picture of their child's progress, including the number of physical interventions, their duration and level
 - the school's website meets the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE)
 - the complaints policy explicitly provides the timeline in which complaints will be investigated and completed.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - enabling teaching assistants and teachers to assess the learning needs of pupils prior to the pupils coming into the classroom so that adults are in a better position to support learning
 - using homework to extend and build upon the learning completed during the school day.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that staff use effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour (paragraph 3, 3(h)).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements that are made to safeguard and promote the well-being of pupils have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15).
- The proprietor must ensure that the welfare of pupils is safeguarded and promoted by drawing up and effectively implementing a written risk assessment policy and that appropriate actions are taken to reduce the risks identified (paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)).
- The proprietor must comply with the standard about the provision of information by ensuring that the school's website includes details about the arrangements for safeguarding and details about the headteacher (paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(c) and 32(2)(c)).

- The proprietor must ensure that the complaints policy sets out clear timescales for the management of a complaint outside the school's term times (paragraph 33, 33(c)).
- The proprietor must ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, fulfilling their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The proprietor, leaders and managers have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietor has not sufficiently ensured, through robust risk assessments, that the school can provide the support required to meet the needs of the young people it admits. In addition, the proprietor has not made sure that risks have been regularly reviewed.
- In the recent past, there have been incidents that should have triggered urgent action and the seeking of crucial external support. The actions required to ensure the safety of pupils and staff were not undertaken with due diligence. Serious concerns have not been followed up in a timely manner, to the detriment of some pupils' health and well-being.
- Although staff know where pupils are, their attendance in school is not always correctly recorded.
- Reports to parents are regular and supplemented by telephone calls. However, sometimes these reports can mask true progress that a pupil is making in managing their behaviour. Reports to parents are too ambiguous and open to misinterpretation, for example about the number, types and duration of any physical interventions required by staff to ensure that the safety of the young person is assured.
- The curriculum is suitably wide-ranging. It is augmented with targeted therapies that are delivered by the specialist from the therapy unit on the school's site. Music lessons, as with art, are taught by dedicated specialists. Music therapy is also effectively delivered to individuals by qualified music therapists.
- The resident horses are very popular, providing experiences for riding, animal husbandry and equine therapy. The school grounds also provide experiences of nature trails, carts, trikes and bikes. The pupils have regular swimming sessions in the school's indoor heated pool. The sports hall is equally well used for individual trampoline sessions and climbing, using the dedicated climbing wall.
- Visits from successful adults, who have similar barriers to learning as the pupils, inspire the pupils to be the best they can be, have a career and to follow their dreams.

Governance

- The proprietor and those responsible for governance do not make sure that:
 - all of the independent school standards are met
 - safeguarding is effective, through the use of robust risk assessments, the accurate recording of pupils' attendance and the recording of accurate and sufficient detail in the records reporting physical intervention by staff to keep pupils safe
 - the provision provided by the school can fully support the needs of young people who attend
 - teaching support staff have sufficient time to prepare with teachers to focus on learning activities before lessons start

- the school's website meets the requirements of the independent schools standards and the DfE.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The safeguarding policy published on the school's website is not fit for purpose. It refers to out-of-date information and does not take into account current government requirements.
- The risk assessments made of young people prior to their joining the school are not sufficiently robust.
- Risk assessments made of pupils are not sufficiently reviewed, or robustly maintained, to ensure that the school can meet their needs and keep them safe in an appropriate manner.
- When the school is struggling to, or can no longer, support the needs of a young person the school does not involve external agencies fast enough or sufficiently demand their support for the young person.
- The school's attendance register is not an accurate record of pupils' attendance.
- The records reporting the need for physical intervention of staff to support pupils' safety do not contain sufficient detail.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The risk assessment of pupils before they join the school is not sufficiently robust. Some pupils join the school and then have to leave it because their level of special educational need is too complex or their behaviour too challenging for staff to manage appropriately.
- Adults frequently support pupils on a one-to-one, or one-to-two, basis in lessons. However, too often teaching assistants do not discuss pupils' learning needs with the teacher before the pupils arrive for their lesson. This happens particularly at the start of the school day. Consequently, adults are not sufficiently prepared to be able to help pupils move on in their learning. This results in work that is less challenging than it needs to be and often causes work to be repeated that pupils, particularly the most able, have already demonstrated they can do.
- Personal, social, health and citizenship education is taught effectively through well-planned sequences of lessons, assemblies and extra-curricular activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well throughout the planned curriculum. However, homework does not sufficiently support or extend the work completed during the school day. The specific targets relating to 'communication, social skills and understanding, learning, life skills, health and well-being and risk reduction' in pupils' individual education plans are not sufficiently followed up or addressed to maximise pupils' personal development and well-being after the end of the school day.
- During the school day, there are opportunities to share with pupils the way of life in their local community and for them to experience life in modern Britain. The forest school was used to raise money for sports relief and pupils experience playing bowls with adults from

the local village.

- There are more practical activities, particularly for the older and less able pupils, than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils appreciate these experiences and they make learning more purposeful for them. For example, sensory experiences to develop letter formation using sand trays and glitter make learning exciting, with the pupils being able to work together sharing the physical experience.
- Good use is made of the school's library to encourage a joy of reading for pleasure and to move pupils from one type of learning activity to another. This helps to reduce levels of stress and anxiety through following known procedures. All pupils, including the most able pupils, benefit from this resource.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. The school leaders and those responsible for governance accept some young people onto the school roll that those in the school cannot fully support. This is because they either do not have a holistic understanding of the complexity of the young person's needs before they attend the school or have not accurately judged the potential implications of the complex behaviours and learning needs of the young person.
- When the needs of the young person attending the school become more complex and/or their condition deteriorates, the school does not alert external agencies fast enough. The proprietor, senior leaders and those responsible for governance have not acted with sufficient urgency in demanding support for staff or the young person.
- Pupils have access to a fully qualified counsellor. They can also make their views known through the school council who help to make changes, where appropriate, based on democratic principles.
- Staff know where pupils are during the school day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. The behaviour of some pupils is not effectively managed. Some young people require extensive physical restraints, additional adult physical intervention and extended periods of restriction of their liberty in order to keep them safe. This information is not always recorded in sufficient accuracy or detail.
- The school keeps an attendance register to record pupils' attendance in the morning and afternoon. These records show that attendance is good. However, the record is not accurate. Sometimes the pupil is marked as being in attendance at school, when they are not.
- Pupils are taught about e-safety and have specific lessons on relationships and how to keep themselves safe. Those who spoke with the inspector knew who to go to if they had any concerns and could distinguish right from wrong. They reported that they felt safe at the school and trusted staff to keep them safe. They feel they help them to learn to manage their anxieties and outbursts of frustration or anger.

- When pupils are appropriately placed, staff develop a good understanding of the often small visual or verbal signs that pupils exhibit when they start to become anxious or distressed. This allows them to re-direct activities or provide ways of calming pupils' stress levels so that potential incidents of inappropriate behaviour are speedily de-escalated. This reduces the need for staff to physically intervene with these pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The proprietor has not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. This has a negative impact on the achievement of some pupils. Those pupils who have been inappropriately placed, or where their needs can no longer be met, do not make the progress they should and are not well prepared for when they leave school.
- The majority of pupils struggle to communicate verbally. Those pupils who cannot read words have signs and symbols to help them communicate, using them to make choices and to demonstrate their learning.
- Pupils develop an interest in books, either reading for themselves or having them read to them. Pupils have a good range of books from which to choose to read for pleasure, which they do.
- Cohort sizes are very small and, due to the wide range of abilities and special educational needs of the pupils, are difficult to compare. However, there are no discernible patterns to indicate any differences between the progress made of those entitled to the pupil premium grant, the level of pupils' prior attainment or by their gender.
- All those who are appropriately placed in the school make at least the expected progress or above in a wide range of subjects, including literacy and numeracy. They develop good social skills due to the multi-team approach by staff to enhance pupils' communication and understanding of the world around them.
- The best progress is made in art and design which is taught by a dedicated specialist who teaches art to all groups.
- Physical development and a healthy lifestyle are well taught and successfully promoted. The meals provided by the kitchen enable the needs of pupils with specific dietary requirements to be met.

Sixth form provision

Inadequate

- Overall, the provision for young people is inadequate because safeguarding is not effective. The school does not meet the needs of some students on the school roll. When this happens, actions to secure a more appropriate placement take too long.
- Students in the sixth form have a curriculum that is designed appropriately for their age and, for the most part, their capability. As part of their food technology course, a group of students benefit from travelling to a local school and working with other sixth formers. This extends their learning outside their own school's environment, mixing with other young people of the same age and developing their social interaction skills.
- Students' folders show that they follow an appropriate range of courses at the levels best suited to their abilities, needs and wishes. As with the main school, art, music, equine and

physical activities are used to develop students' academic skills as well as their personal development and well-being.

- As with the main school, from their various starting points, those students who are appropriately placed at the school make good progress in their learning of literacy and numeracy. By the time they leave school they are in a better position to communicate their thoughts and choices with others. The most able students also make at least good progress from their starting points. They have roles of responsibility, such as running the tuck shop, learning how to handle money and developing social and communication skills.
- When students visit other schools, or venues, as part of their studies they are always escorted and supported by Forum school staff. If a student is struggling to come into school, staff go to their home in order to help them re-engage with their learning.
- Students have access to impartial careers advice and they have appropriate experiences of the world of work. The most able students are able to go to college and lead semi-independent lives.

School details

Unique reference number	116593
DfE registration number	835/6033
Inspection number	10006038

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 category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	17
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Anne-Marie Carrie
Executive headteacher	Karen Gittens
Acting headteacher	David Keeton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£94,766
Telephone number	01258 860 295
Website	www.cambiangroup.com
Email address	education@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	16 to 17 October 2012

Information about this school

- There are 34 pupils currently on roll. Generally, very few who attend the school are of primary age. Most pupils join the school towards the end of the secondary phase and typically just over half are in the sixth form.
- All pupils have autistic spectrum conditions and severe learning difficulties. In addition, they may have attention deficit hyperactivity conditions, Down's syndrome or other

medical needs. Since the previous inspection in October 2012, the needs of the pupils have become more complex and their presenting behaviour more challenging. The vast majority of pupils have severe communication difficulties; most are not verbal.

- All pupils are entitled to receive support from the Year 7 catch-up fund.
- A very small minority of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium fund.
- The majority of pupils are White British boys.
- In January 2015, the leadership and management teams were reorganised. Most recently, in September 2016, the previous deputy headteacher became the acting headteacher. The acting headteacher is supported by an interim principal and an executive headteacher who oversees two Cambian-run schools.
- The school does not use alternative providers.
- The school's previous standard inspection was undertaken from 16 to 17 October 2012, when the school was judged to be outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings and reviews of school documentation were conducted with governors, and staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including information about pupils' performance and progress, procedures for safeguarding, monitoring attendance and in relation to the independent schools standards.
- The inspector observed pupils throughout the school day. She visited classes and carried out joint observations with senior leaders. She also looked at pupils' written work and pictorial records of their learning. Discussions were held both formally and informally with pupils. The inspector listened to pupils read, attended an assembly and joined some of the sixth form when they visited Clayesmore School, which they do as a regular part of their food course.
- The inspector took account of the views from the eight completed staff questionnaires, the 10 results from the point-in-time survey from placing authorities, and the two responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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