

Oakwood School

C/O Cambian Education, 4th Floor Waterfront, Chancellors Road, London W6 9RU

Inspection dates

5–7 June 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that the independent school standards are consistently met. The progress that pupils make is not yet good in some of the subjects that are taught.
- Though teaching has improved, pupils' progress in writing and some aspects of the wider curriculum, such as history and geography, requires further improvement.
- Pupils' progress in key stages 1 and 2 is not as strong as in other areas. Though developing, the key stage 1 outdoor environment does not promote learning well.
- Pupils' reading is not promoted well beyond the school day.
- On occasion, the level of challenge is insufficient in some subjects. Teachers do not routinely adapt activities when learning is too easy.
- Those with responsibility for holding the headteacher and senior leaders to account do not do so stringently. Monitoring has improved but is not well recorded; as a result, it is difficult to track developments over time.
- The development of leadership beyond the headteacher is currently limited. There is scope for middle leaders to play a greater part in improving the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders within the Cambian Group and the school's headteacher have brought about many rapid improvements.
- The headteacher has vision, drive and ambition. She is well respected by staff and has a wide range of skills and expertise.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved significantly. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan and provide effective lessons.
- Assessment systems are now well established. Teachers use information about pupils' performance intelligently to devise effective sequences of learning.
- Despite the often very challenging circumstances that pupils have experienced, they respond well to staff and their behaviour is good.
- This is a happy school. Pupils are well cared for by attentive and committed staff.

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 leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the rigour of monitoring and support for teachers is sustained
 - senior leaders offer an even higher level of challenge and support to the school's leaders so that strengths and areas for development can be tracked in more detail
 - middle leaders are provided with training and support to expand their roles to enable them to have a greater impact on the overall standard of education.
- Further improve pupils' outcomes, by making sure that:
 - teaching continues to respond effectively to pupils' needs and starting points
 - teachers adapt their teaching if it is evident that pupils require a greater level of challenge
 - teachers in key stages 1 and 2 receive further support to build on the improvements that have been secured in the last six months
 - the key stage 1 outdoor environment is enhanced to offer pupils more opportunities to develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills
 - expectations of what pupils will achieve in the wider curriculum are on a par with those found in core subjects such as mathematics
 - pupils continue to receive regular opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills across the whole curriculum
 - work continues between the school and the care homes attended by pupils to promote reading more fully.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and senior representatives within the Cambian Group have not ensured that the independent school standards are consistently met. Pupils' progress is not yet good enough. However, leaders are frank and honest about this shortcoming and recognise that the improvements made within teaching and learning will take more time to filter through fully to raising standards. The headteacher and senior representatives have the capacity to secure further improvements.
- Though the headteacher demonstrates many key strengths and attributes, the capacity of wider leaders within the school is currently limited. The headteacher's work over the past six months has rightly focused on improving teaching, learning and assessment. Improvement work, including the development of middle leaders, now has scope to expand further.
- Cambian Group's senior representatives have offered a range of effective challenge and support to the school; however, this is not well recorded. As a result, it is not possible to track fully the school's evolving strengths and areas for development. Their support has focused on key areas that were identified as issues at the last monitoring inspection and does not take enough account of other aspects of provision. For example, there is no plan for developing capacity in middle leaders or improving the key stage 1 outdoor environment.
- The headteacher has vision and ambition and has addressed almost all of the key issues that were identified at the monitoring inspection in December 2017. She has high expectations and has instilled a strong sense of passion and pride in the school's workforce.
- The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate. Leaders are clear about what has improved and what is not yet good enough. A strong correlation exists between the findings of inspection activities and the school's own monitoring records. The headteacher has a very clear overview of the quality of teaching. Where the quality of teaching was not securely good, rigorous support was established. This support has successfully addressed any shortcomings.
- The curriculum has developed considerably. Long-term plans effectively set out the key skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils will learn and are complemented by detailed medium-term plans that take account of pupils' needs. A strong balance between academic and personal development exists; for example, pupils have opportunities to learn away from the school at an outdoor education centre and a horse-riding school. As a result, the vast majority of pupils are engaged in their learning.
- All members of staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire stated that they feel proud to work at the school and that pupils are safe. Several staff wrote additional comments in their responses to commend the work of the headteacher. Staff feel that they are well supported and that the school has improved rapidly in the last six months. One member of staff commented: 'We are a safe happy team all working together to encourage the pupils.'
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils visit local places of worship to learn about other faiths. In recent months, pupils in key stage 3 visited the Justice Museum in Nottingham where they learned about the

repercussions of not following rules in Victorian Britain. Pupils are also aware of the role of their local police. They have been visited by local officers who took time to explain what they do and why. These experiences help pupils to develop their understanding of modern British values and citizenship.

Governance

- The Cambian Group has appointed a headteacher with the skills and knowledge to bring about important improvements. Senior representatives within the Cambian Group have worked effectively with the headteacher to bring about much positive change. They are honest and frank about their work. They are committed to securing further improvements and have focused on securing good-quality teaching.
- The partnership work between the headteacher and Cambian representatives has been effective. The director of education acknowledges that there is scope to build greater capacity in middle leadership and ensure that oversight from representatives who support the school has even greater rigour.
- The chief executive officer (CEO) knows the school well. She is committed to ensuring that staff focus both on pupils' personal development and on their educational outcomes. This drive and precise focus has contributed to the improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school does not have its own website but a copy of the safeguarding policy is available upon request. The policy is appropriate and fit for purpose. Day-to-day safeguarding and record-keeping are robust. Staff know exactly what to do if they have a concern and can recall the key messages from training that they have received.
- Child protection records are well organised. Records include clear chronologies and list any concerns about pupils in one easy to access place. Records are detailed and contain the actions taken by leaders to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The school's curriculum has been designed to provide pupils with regular opportunities to learn how to stay safe. These include recent visits from the local police force, Shropshire's road safety team and important e-safety messages.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved rapidly since the last monitoring inspection. There is much greater consistency in practice across the school. Teachers state that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities and now make much better use of assessment.
- Teachers carefully assess what pupils can do when they first arrive at the school and use this information to address any gaps in learning. This work is having a positive impact. Pupils now spend longer on different aspects of learning so that they are confident with the skills that they acquire before they move onto something new.

- Teachers use questioning well to engage and encourage pupils. For example, to explore prior learning, teachers assess what pupils are able to recall and whether they are ready to make links to new ideas. This was exemplified particularly well in a key stage 3 history lesson. Pupils were learning about the crusades. The teacher skilfully introduced the topic with open questions and an examination of a large timeline. The teacher encouraged pupils to share key words from video and sound clips. As a result, pupils responded quickly to questions, were engaged, and successfully made links to prior learning.
- Similarly, in a key stage 2 lesson, through effective questioning and a strong understanding of the pupils' needs and interests, a teacher supported a pupil to find Egypt in a world atlas. In another key stage 3 lesson, a teacher challenged pupils by asking them to locate three figure grid references on an Ordnance Survey map of Shrewsbury. In all of these lessons, pupils were engaged and enjoying their learning as a result of strong planning, purposeful activities and focused questions from teachers.
- The majority of pupils are ready to learn and want to come to school because teachers work hard to build meaningful relationships and want the very best for them. Some pupils have significant gaps in their learning and have often spent large periods away from education. Teachers overcome these barriers by getting to know pupils, understanding their needs and building a comprehensive package of academic and personal support.
- An effective new assessment system is in place that is well understood by pupils and staff. The system allows teachers to identify clearly what pupils can and cannot do and is used to develop targets. Targets are also derived from pupils' education, health and care plans and personal education plans. Pupils' performance is regularly monitored by the headteacher.
- Support staff are highly committed and demonstrate an unwavering support for the pupils. They have strong subject knowledge, offer effective support to pupils and enjoy working at the school.
- Teachers effectively encourage pupils to develop a love of reading. For younger pupils, a systematic approach to phonics ensures that they learn the important skills of recognising different sounds and blending them to make whole words. Older pupils receive tailored additional support to address any gaps they may have in their reading. The school arranges for pupils to take books back to their care homes to read and enjoy with staff. However, these are not always shared well. There are limited entries in some pupils' reading records regarding what books have been read outside of school and the impact of this on pupils' enjoyment of reading.
- On occasion, staff do not adjust activities quickly enough to fully maintain pupils' engagement and ensure that they challenge them sufficiently. Some pupils are quick to demonstrate their understanding and are ready to move onto more challenging learning.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their basic writing skills. This is particularly the case in some aspects of the wider curriculum in key stages 1 and 2. Staff do not always insist on the same standards of presentation and handwriting throughout the curriculum. Pupils' English books evidence much better standards of work and demonstrate pupils' true capability.
- The key stage 1 outdoor environment requires further development so that it is a space that can fully support learning. Resources have not yet been established to promote pupils' basic reading, writing and mathematics skills in this area. As a result, pupils do not have enough to engage them or keep them interested when they enter the outdoor area.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff and pupils enjoy excellent relationships. These relationships foster trust and help pupils feel confident.
- Pupils' emotional well-being is at the heart of the school's work. Staff use a range of strategies and resources to measure pupils' emotions and feelings. Every pupil is carefully assessed so that staff can pinpoint specific needs and target any particular gaps that pupils may have. The school's records evidence the important milestones that pupils achieve over time.
- Pupils are proud to take on responsibilities. During the inspection, school councillors described the important work that they do in gathering the views of their friends and setting out their wishes to staff. The school council is valued by pupils and gives them an opportunity to voice their opinions.
- The school uses the latest government guidance to benchmark how well they support pupils with careers education and guidance. Pupils in key stage 3 meet with commissioned external experts on a regular basis to discuss their skills and career aspirations. Leaders also arrange for pupils to visit external events so that they can gather information about different options. For example, pupils recently attended Telford's apprenticeship fair.
- There are very few incidents of bullying in the school. Pupils state that they are confident that staff will deal with any concerns that they may have.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils often join the school having missed large parts of their education. Pupils experience significant changes and challenges within their daily lives. Given all of these challenges, pupils behave well at Oakwood and do their very best to listen to instructions.
- The school's motto makes clear the expectations of staff: 'Ready, Respectful and Safe'. Almost all pupils cooperate with one another and work hard to achieve 'ticks' against their personal targets in every lesson.
- Some pupils have had a history of very poor attendance at their previous schools. Pupils' attendance improves when they join Oakwood.
- Leaders expect pupils to be at school every day and they monitor any absence that gives cause for concern. All pupils attend the school full time.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is not yet strong across the curriculum. Improvements in teaching have resulted in better rates of progress since the time of the last inspection but this is not consistent across the school.

- Standards are more variable in key stages 1 and 2 than in key stage 3. In these phases, teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills. This is particularly the case in subjects such as history, geography and religious education.
- The most able pupils sometimes undertake activities that are too easy for them. As a result, their progress is not as rapid as it could be and outcomes are not strong. Teachers do not reshape activities sufficiently to ensure that a high level of challenge is maintained.
- Pupils make better rates of progress in mathematics. Teachers deliver units of learning in a systematic and logical way; this support pupils to develop a firm grasp of different aspects of mathematics before moving on to more challenging learning.
- Pupils across key stage 3 make the strongest progress. Work in pupils' books evidences how much pupils engage with their learning. Standards of presentation and handwriting are more consistent across different subjects in this key stage.

School details

Unique reference number	131033
DfE registration number	893/6097
Inspection number	10047129

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	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Headteacher	Lisa Lyon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,500
Telephone number	0800 138 1184
Website	www.cambiangroup.com/childrensservices/specialisteducationservices
Email address	lisa.lyon@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	13–15 May 2015

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection was conducted on 15 and 16 May 2015. An emergency inspection was conducted on 14 December 2017.
- The school makes use of two alternative providers called 'Stable Relationships' and 'Jamie Drummond Outdoor Activities'. Staff accompany pupils on all visits to the providers.
- Oakwood School is an independent special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Almost all pupils who attend the school have either an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- All pupils are looked after and are funded by a range of different local authorities.
- Prior to January 2015, the school was called Flying High.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector conducted a wide range of inspection activities including: meetings with the headteacher, director of education and designated safeguarding lead; observations of teaching in all key stages; scrutiny of pupils' work in books in several subject areas; and a review of data relating to pupils' performance, personal development and attendance. Most observations of teaching were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector held a discussion with Cambian's CEO via the telephone.
- Documentation was reviewed to check compliance with the independent school standards. The inspector took account of: risk assessments; fire safety records; policies and procedures; the prospectus and the school's accessibility plan.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View to conduct an analysis. There were no free-text responses.
- The inspector reviewed feedback from 13 respondents to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The inspector held a telephone discussion with Shropshire's local authority designated officer for safeguarding. The inspector also spoke to two social workers from two local authorities that place pupils at the school.
- The inspector spoke to pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Jonathan Keay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) 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.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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