

Cambian Walnut Tree Lodge School

Inspection dates

12–14 June 2018

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Senior leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is too optimistic. Plans for school improvement do not include precise milestones by which the school's progress can be measured.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. Some teachers do not address the gaps in pupils' knowledge, leading to inconsistent outcomes.
- At times, teachers' expectations are not high enough in relation to what pupils can achieve.
- Sometimes, work lacks sufficient challenge, particularly for the most able.
- Some pupils do not make sufficient progress in science. Standards are not rising quickly enough.
- Behaviour in lessons is not managed consistently well by all teachers. Staff do not always challenge the use of derogatory language.
- Attendance is improving. However, some pupils are persistently absent or late to school. As a result, they miss out on their learning and this reduces the progress they make.

The school has the following strengths

- The proprietor, governors and the headteacher are ambitious for the school to move forwards.
- The curriculum is carefully designed to meet pupils' needs.
- Therapy sessions promote emotion regulation, empathy, confidence and self-esteem in pupils.
- The careers advice and guidance pupils receive is strong. As a result, the older pupils have given sufficient thought to their next steps.
- Pupils feel safe and are taught to stay safe in a range of situations. They make good progress in their personal development and enjoy warm relationships with 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 the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that the self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate
 - making sure that the school's improvement planning contains measurable targets by which progress can be evaluated
 - addressing urgently the inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in science
 - ensuring that staff consistently implement the behaviour policy
 - continuing to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- Improve the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment and raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers accurately identify pupils' starting points so that they can move pupils on from what they already know, understand and can do
 - teachers make good use of assessment information to set work which provides suitable challenge for all pupils
 - teachers all have high expectations so that they challenge pupils to learn as much as they can in lessons
 - the most able pupils are set work that challenges them to think deeply, so they reach the highest standard they can
 - teachers are well-equipped to improve outcomes in science.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders' actions have not secured consistently strong outcomes for all groups of pupils. Leaders have systems that are now beginning to secure improvements in line with their plans for the school's development. They have introduced new systems, policies and expectations. This has led to some improvement in key areas.
- The school's self-evaluation summary does not reflect the school's current effectiveness because it is overly-optimistic. The school's improvement plan does not set out clearly how leaders are going to resolve weaknesses. There are no identified milestones to make sure that plans stay on track, or clear measures of success in terms of anticipated improvements in outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have not ensured that teaching and learning are of a consistently high standard across all subject areas. Consequently, over time, pupils have not made the progress they should, particularly in science.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils' conduct in lessons is of a consistently high standard. Consequently, pupils are not able to fully concentrate on their learning and incidents of low-level disruption are common.
- The analysis of pupils' attendance is completed on an individual basis. The school has worked hard on this aspect, particularly in the light of pupils having missed substantial periods of their education before joining the school. Attendance is improving but remains too low.
- The headteacher has a very strong sense of moral purpose and has acted determinedly to provide some much-needed direction. The headteacher has an astute and honest understanding of the prevalent issues. She has prioritised areas requiring immediate action and has reviewed key roles and responsibilities to ensure that planned actions are achieved. Actions of leaders have not had sufficient impact.
- The headteacher monitors the effectiveness of teaching through visits to lessons and reviewing the work in pupils' books. There is inconsistency in the quality of teaching, and the progress pupils make.
- Pupils have a bespoke curriculum which is tailored to their abilities. The headteacher has ensured that detailed schemes of work are in place. Where staff do not have the appropriate knowledge, the headteacher has used staff at other local Cambian schools to tutor pupils or has bought in specialist staff for certain subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils in receipt of pupil premium are not falling behind their peers. This is because the school ensures that pupils receive personalised tutoring to help them with their studies.
- The headteacher has implemented a more rigorous assessment system. Baseline tests are used to review pupils' starting points accurately. Leaders have developed effective ways to measure pupils' academic development as well as their social, emotional and behavioural progress.

- The proprietor has provided a wide range of training for the school's teachers, focused mainly on pastoral aspects. Staff have not yet received the same level of training to develop their teaching skills.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Leaders arrange a wide range of experiences to further develop and prepare them for some of the risks they may face when they leave. These are carefully delivered, and are taken on board by pupils. Pupils commented positively about their learning from visits, such as a trip to Cambridge to do punting, ten-pin bowling and a visit to the zoo.
- Staff that responded to the Ofsted questionnaire are proud to work at the school. Staff meet regularly to share ideas and resources.

Governance

- Members of the Cambian Group and those responsible for governance are ambitious for the school and its pupils. Lines of accountability are clear.
- The director of education for the Cambian Group is rightfully realistic about the extent of issues needing to be addressed. He has appropriate expertise and experience to bring to this role. He has identified correctly that some pupils do not attend school often enough to make the progress required to catch up with their peers. He is working closely with the headteacher to raise the profile of attendance in the school.
- Members of the Cambian Group have undergone relevant safeguarding training and ensure that all staff have received up-to-date and appropriate training.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The single central record of the suitability of staffing meets requirements. Leaders check and record information very carefully.
- Staff know individual pupils well and discuss any concerns about the pupils' welfare appropriately. Child protection procedures are robust. Leaders work closely with local agencies in child protection matters. They work meticulously to keep pupils safe. They have accessed up-to-date training in the support of pupils with social, emotional and mental-health needs.
- Training for staff is comprehensive and up to date. This includes training around issues such as child sexual exploitation, preventing radicalisation and extremism, female genital mutilation and the impact of gang involvement. All staff are knowledgeable about the potential risks to pupils and are confident about identifying and reporting possible child protection concerns.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is regularly reviewed to meet the developing needs of pupils around their understanding of how to keep safe. Pupils say that they are taught about how to stay safe from gang culture, sexting, smoking and drugs and taught about e-safety. They feel safe and well looked after by staff. They know who to go to if they have concerns.

- The school undertakes a wealth of risk assessments, which are appropriate. They are monitored with sufficient rigour to ensure they remain fit for purpose. They contain specific guidance for staff around exact actions to take to ensure that they minimise risk during 'down time' on visits.
- Leaders have ensured that the school complies with regulations in relation to health and safety, for example the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2015.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The impact of good-quality teaching over time is not evident in all subjects across the curriculum. This is particularly true of science, where pupils do not make the progress they should. In some subjects, such as science, pupils are not given enough opportunities to build on their prior learning.
- Although some pupils are making rapid strides in their attendance and time keeping, other pupils are frequently absent. As a result, they find it difficult to maintain their progress.
- Leaders have provided training for all staff to help them improve teaching and learning, including the sharing of good practice across the school. However, not all staff have incorporated this learning into their day-to-day practice.
- Teachers' expectations are not high enough. Pupils told the inspector that they often found the work too easy or were covering things they had done in their previous school. Where this happens, pupils lose focus and enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers do not consistently explain the meaning of key words to develop pupils' understanding of new concepts. This makes learning more difficult for pupils, particularly if they have missed a large amount of their education.
- Staff are not using assessment information consistently well. As a result, their expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes too low.
- Pupils' attitudes in class are not always conducive to appropriate learning. Some pupils do not engage in learning well because work is not set according to their needs. This results in low-level disruption, affecting the learning of other pupils.
- Some teachers demonstrate highly effective approaches to questioning and checking whether pupils have understood new concepts. They are skilled at planning lessons that link the content of the lesson to real-life situations. For example, in a vocational lesson, the teacher ensured that pupils understood how they could apply the knowledge of caring for individuals to everyday situations.
- Pupils make better progress when their work addresses the gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding caused by poor attendance in their mainstream schools.
- Therapy lessons, such as mindfulness, encourage pupils to alleviate stress through improving emotion regulation, leading to a better mood, a better ability to handle stress, improved patience and an improved self-awareness.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' self-esteem is often low when they arrive at school. Staff work hard to boost their self-worth and ensure they feel valued. For example, they encourage pupils to participate in celebration award assemblies, where pupils receive certificates for their attendance and good work.
- Staff are vigilant and sensitive to pupils' welfare needs. They build relationships with pupils as quickly as they can. Staff nurture pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils trust the adults in the school to help them to overcome any difficulties that they may encounter.
- Themes in assemblies and therapy sessions guide pupils to lead safe and healthy lives, to understand about physical and emotional well-being and to understand the dangers of certain lifestyles.
- Staff promote pupils' physical and emotional well-being very well. Fundamental British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are firmly embedded within the positive ethos of the school.
- Pupils feel safe in school and bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that staff will deal promptly with any incidents should they happen. Visible staff presence helps pupils to feel secure in school.
- Pupils learn about how to protect themselves from gangs, drugs, the dangers of radicalisation, substance misuse and child sexual exploitation. Therapy teams work closely with teaching staff to reduce the anxiety levels of pupils in lessons.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils receive the impartial careers guidance they need to raise their aspirations and help them to make informed choices about their futures.
- The school site is well kept, secure and well supervised.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The school provides education for pupils with complex needs and high levels of anxiety, and behaviour is not yet good.
- Although the school has a revised behaviour policy, it is not consistently applied by staff. Low-level disruption in lessons prevents some pupils from making the progress they should. Off-task behaviours are seen when teachers' expectations of behaviour are not high enough.
- Pupils' behaviour is not yet good enough. Swearing is not always corrected by staff. This falls below the school's expectations.
- School leaders have focused on improving attendance. As a result, the attendance of most pupils has improved and is much better than when they attended their mainstream school, where many were school refusers. However, it is still not good enough.

- Some pupils are late for school in the mornings. As a result, they do not make the most of the teaching, learning and assessment on offer. This limits progress.
- The recent introduction of consistent expectations, clear boundaries, and manageable rewards and sanctions is making a positive difference to most pupils but is not embedded.
- Pupils are polite and welcoming. During the inspection, pupils greeted the inspector warmly, and were keen to share their experiences about the school.
- Fixed-term exclusions are rare. There are no permanent exclusions.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils arrive with a wide range of needs, different skills and knowledge. Some teachers tailor work carefully for each pupil and consequently pupils make good progress over time. However, this is variable. Some work carried out with pupils does not meet their needs as accurately as it could, particularly for the most-able. Progress in lessons is variable because assessment information is not used well by all staff. The school's tracking systems and evidence from lessons confirm that pupils make better progress in English, dance, and travel and tourism than in other subjects.
- Pupils join and leave the school at different times throughout the year. They are performing below age-related expectations when they arrive, due to their severe emotional, social and mental-health difficulties.
- The majority of pupils have been excluded from or unable to cope with mainstream education and have missed a substantial period of their education. As a result, many pupils have made very little progress academically since they left their previous school.
- Pupils who have education, health and care plans have targets which are well matched to their needs. They are carefully monitored. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- There are no differences in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and other pupils.
- Staff provide opportunities for pupils to participate in work experience according to their specific interests and aspirations. For example, pupils work in a restaurant and as a shop assistant, volunteering to work in the charity shop. Pupils have the opportunity to gain skills and a range of qualifications in preparation for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Careers advice is managed carefully and successfully. Pupils learn how to write their curriculum vitae, how to dress appropriately for an interview, participate in mock interviews and access in-house workshops according to their likes, for example, hair and beauty.

Sixth form provision

Requires improvement

- The school has a very small number of students in the sixth form.
- The provision in the sixth form is similar to that of the rest of the school. It is not good.

- Pupils often struggle to recall work done previously or to relate their learning in one subject to that in another. The school is attempting to address this with individual and group work that is better suited to students' abilities.
- Low-level disruption prevents some students from learning to their full ability. The majority of students make good progress in their personal and emotional development. Pupils are well supported by therapy staff. The dedicated staff understand the needs of pupils well. As a result, pupils are leaving the school and successfully returning to mainstream education, college or successful placements elsewhere.
- Students are provided with a range of courses according to their ability and interests. Students perform as well on the vocational courses as they do on the academic ones, due to the personalised curriculum they follow.
- Leaders support students' college applications and offer personalised support to students during transition. The school works hard to ensure that students move into sustained education, employment or training which successfully matches their career aspirations when they leave the school. Last year, all students were successful in obtaining places suitable to their individual needs, due to a very thorough and thoughtful programme.

School details

Unique reference number	135990
DfE registration number	822/6014
Inspection number	10054010

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	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	C/O Cambian Education
Chair	Anne Marie Carrie
Headteacher	Kicha Mitchell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,500
Telephone number	0800 138 1184
Website	www.cambianguroup.com/cambianguroup.aspx
Email address	education@cambianguroup.com
Date of previous inspection	4–6 October 2016

Information about this school

- Cambian Walnut Tree Lodge School is owned by the Cambian Group.
- The Cambian Group provides a wide range of services for children nationally. The company aims 'to actively enable each and every one of the people in our care to achieve their personal best, however it is defined by them or for them'.

- All pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- The school provides education for pupils who have social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.
- A very small proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The headteacher supervises another school as well as Walnut Tree Lodge School. A lead teacher deputises at all times when the headteacher is not present.
- The previous standard inspection took place on 4 to 6 October 2016, when the school was judged to require improvement.
- The school had a progress monitoring visit on the 17 October 2017. The inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school had made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection. The school did not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during the progress monitoring inspection.
- At the previous inspection, the lead inspector identified that the school had not registered itself properly with the Department for Education so that the registration accurately represented the age and gender of pupils on site. The school has since decided not to amend its original registration and is no longer seeking an amendment.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the school, jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work in books and folders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and lead teacher.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the director of education of the Cambian Group.
- Telephone conversations were held with the representatives of four local authorities.
- The inspector examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning, assessment information, and school policies and procedures.
- The inspector spoke formally with pupils as well as informally during the school day.
- No pupils responded to Ofsted's online survey.
- The inspector spoke with one parent by telephone during the inspection.
- There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke formally with staff and considered the seven responses to Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not 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
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time
 - 3(d) 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
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught
 - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

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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