

# Darwin School

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

## Inspection dates

10–12 July 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The proprietor and school leaders have ensured that all independent school standards have been met. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the school.
- The headteacher has a positive impact on the quality of provision in the school. All members of staff share high expectations for what pupils can achieve. They have created an effective curriculum to meet the needs of each pupil.
- Outcomes are good. Pupils achieve qualifications that support them in their next steps in education, training or employment.
- Relationships in the school are strong. Staff actively promote the school's values and there are clear expectations that are lived out in the day-to-day life of the school.
- Teachers understand pupils well. They are skilled at recognising the triggers that can cause pupils to become distressed. As a result, behaviour in classrooms is good overall.
- Safeguarding is effective. The school has robust systems in place and staff are well trained and knowledgeable. Pupils feel safe in the school.
- Staff actively promote British values through the curriculum and themed events.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The positive school culture promotes equality for all very effectively.
- Staff focus strongly on personal development. Pupils make good progress in developing self-esteem. Pupils' increasing confidence in their abilities supports their positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. Teachers use secure subject knowledge to challenge pupils and skilful questioning to deepen knowledge. However, on occasions, teachers do not provide pupils with the support they need to understand and engage with the tasks set.
- Pupils often arrive in school after experiencing very low levels of school attendance. Once they settle into the school, their attendance rises quickly to that of others nationally. Pupils are not always punctual at the beginning of the day or when moving between lessons.
- Pupils receive effective individual careers guidance. However, planning for careers education is not comprehensive or fully embedded for all pupils across the school.

### 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.

## **Full report**

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

- Reduce inconsistencies in the quality of teaching by:
  - structuring learning activities so that all pupils have the knowledge and skills to engage in lessons and make good progress
  - ensuring that pupils are punctual so that lessons begin with all pupils present and they are ready to learn.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - further development of the planning and monitoring of careers education, advice and guidance and ensuring that it meets the needs of all pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor and school leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The leadership team has a clear understanding of what is needed to move the school forward. The thoughtful approach leaders have taken to enhance the curriculum further demonstrates this well.
- The curriculum is appropriate to the needs of the pupils. Leaders ensure that it contributes well to personal development and British values. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is taught in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons and embedded in other subjects. Poverty week activities included images of poverty in art and making a meal from basic ingredients in food technology. Pupils study the link between Islamic art and number in mathematics. In English, pupils read texts about the Holocaust. The school council also contributes to pupils' understanding of democratic processes.
- Leaders have a strong focus on teaching pupils about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. All staff are well trained, both in national and local issues that have an impact on pupils' welfare.
- Leaders set high expectations for staff and pupils. Staff say that leaders are supportive and that they are encouraged to be creative in their teaching. This has had a positive impact on the strong relationships between staff and pupils.
- Teachers value the opportunities to participate in professional development. They enthusiastically engage in observing one another's teaching and support each other in improving practice. Further work is needed to ensure that all teachers establish the knowledge and skills that pupils need to be well prepared for tasks set in lessons.
- Leaders promote equality and diversity well. Pupils learn respect and tolerance. They say that bullying does not happen in the school because any disagreements are managed effectively through skilful mediation.
- The school keeps good records of pupils' individual needs. Records of starting points are thorough. These provide a reliable basis for planning activities to support academic and social progress.
- The provision is well regarded by other stakeholders. Local authorities who place pupils at the school have very positive views about the school's work. They say that staff rapidly develop a good understanding of pupils' needs and that behaviour and engagement have significantly improved. Staff who responded to the staff questionnaire are also positive in their views of the school.

### Governance

- The proprietor works closely with the director of education. He takes an effective lead in the development of the provision and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work.
- The proprietor has clear expectations that leaders manage the performance of staff through effective procedures for appraisal and target setting. Staff know their personal

goals and understand the expectations placed on them.

- Working with the regional lead, the director of education ensures that staff are well supported. Leaders are stringently held to account for all aspects of the school's performance.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school does not have a website. The safeguarding policy is provided to parents on request.
- The school gives high priority to safeguarding and the protection of pupils. Pupils say they feel safe. The strong culture of safeguarding helps to ensure that pupils are safe and protected.
- The safeguarding policy reflects the latest guidance. Staff are clear about the school's policies and processes in relation to safeguarding. Regular training ensures that their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues are kept up to date.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers have high expectations and encourage pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. All pupils spoken to by the inspector said they liked their lessons, and mathematics in particular. Pupils respond to the increasing academic expectations as they become more settled in the school. This contributes to the overall good progress they make.
- The informal, relaxed atmosphere that teachers establish is helpful for pupils as it puts them at their ease so they are more receptive to learning. Pupils confidently ask questions when they do not understand and they say they learn from their mistakes.
- Teaching is effective in enabling pupils to gain qualifications in a range of academic and vocational courses that boost their confidence. They take pride in their work and were keen to share it with the inspector.
- The school places a strong emphasis on teaching literacy and numeracy skills and pupils recognise their importance. Pupils have joined the local library, and a daily literacy class supports them well in addressing gaps and encouraging reading for pleasure. Pupils' verbal presentations are well planned and delivered confidently.
- All pupils have clear individual education plans that are regularly reviewed, with specific targets for them to achieve. These are effective in supporting improvements in their behaviour and academic performance. Staff use flexible approaches to meet individual needs effectively.
- Therapy is used well to help those pupils who need extra support to cope with social and emotional issues. This has a positive impact on their personal development and helps them to access learning and cope with social situations more successfully.
- Pupils often arrive at school with very little information about their previous learning and attainment. The school has improved its arrangements for assessing pupils' starting points and staff ensure that they respond flexibly in their planning.
- Books show that pupils regularly complete written work, as well as taking part in practical

activities and discussion.

- At the end of every term, the school provides detailed information about pupils' progress to parents and carers.
- Teaching is typically good. Teachers question pupils effectively, encouraging them to reflect on their learning and probing their thinking. On occasion, learning strategies are not effective enough to ensure that pupils can tackle tasks in lessons confidently.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils improve their confidence and self-esteem considerably in the time they are at the school, often from very low starting points.
- The school provides a range of challenging outdoor activities that include a clear emphasis on the development of physical and social skills. The activities are effective in building fitness and resilience and enable pupils to identify alternative ways of dealing with issues.
- Pupils learn about the risks that are present in daily life, including those associated with extremism, sexual exploitation and inappropriate use of the internet. Staff are very aware of the vulnerability of pupils and work very effectively through strong relationships between home and school to ensure consistency in the messages conveyed.
- Pupils understand the various forms of bullying they may encounter. Small group work and close supervision throughout the school day ensure that if a disagreement occurs, it is dealt with quickly. Pupils can identify an adult they can communicate with if they are worried. Pupils say there is no bullying in the school and that they have respect for one another.
- Pupils have opportunities to access alternative provision, for example in physical education, hair and beauty and modern foreign languages. They are always accompanied by a member of staff and communication between alternative providers and the school is effective in ensuring that pupils are safe.
- Leaders use an external provider to ensure that pupils receive effective independent careers guidance. Pupils say they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. They do not always have a realistic understanding of the careers they have chosen, as leaders' planning and monitoring is not systematic across the school.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school.
- The school is a reflective community that helps pupils to manage their own social and emotional issues, to seek ways to address these and to behave responsibly.
- High levels of staffing ensure that pupils are supervised well throughout the day. Specialised training enables staff to employ successful strategies to manage rare incidents of challenging behaviour in a safe and respectful way. Relationships are strong between

staff and pupils and the rewards system supports positive attitudes to behaviour. Pupils' good behaviour contributes to their good progress.

- Almost all pupils attend school regularly. Individual pupils increase their attendance, often significantly, compared to previous placements.
- Pupils are not always punctual in the mornings and when moving between lessons.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils make consistently good progress. Staff assess individual needs when they arrive at the school and take immediate and effective steps to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Pupils have previously experienced a disrupted education, and many have had a significant time out of school. Their attainment is often below average on entry. A culture of high expectations for pupils to achieve and well-taught skills across the curriculum underpin good outcomes.
- The school's progress data indicates that almost all pupils are on track to meet their targets in English, mathematics and other subjects. Where pupils are at risk of falling behind, teachers take effective action to ensure that additional support is in place.
- Many pupils at the school attend for a year and, in that time, have the opportunity to work towards GCSEs, individual awards and functional skills. They also take vocational qualifications in health and social care and food technology. Staff ensure that pupils settle down quickly at the school and pupils soon recognise that qualifications will help them to take the next step in their education, employment or training. They achieve qualifications and are able to take control of their lives.
- Teachers promote literacy and numeracy well across the curriculum.
- The vast majority of the pupils go on to further education, training or employment as a result of intensive teaching programmes that focus on individual needs.
- Pupils become more resilient and confident because of comprehensive social and emotional support. As a result, pupils engage in their learning and want to do the best that they can.

## School details

Unique reference number	131171
DfE registration number	893/6099
Inspection number	10041365

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	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Female
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Chair	Ann-Marie Carrie
Headteacher	Rebecca Bhageerutty
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,500
Telephone number	0800 138 1184
Website	<a href="http://www.cambiangroup.com">www.cambiangroup.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:education@cambiangroup.com">education@cambiangroup.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	23–25 February 2016

## Information about this school

- Darwin School is a small special school that is registered to admit 20 girls aged between eight and 18. It provides an education for those with a range of social, emotional, behaviour and mental health needs.
- All current pupils are in Years 9 to 12. Sixth-form numbers are too small to be reported on. Although the school is registered to admit primary-aged pupils, it has not done so for a number of years.
- Pupils usually stay at the school for one year, before moving on to other placements.
- The school is owned by the Cambian group, which is a company that specialises in

providing a range of specialist children's services, including therapy support. All pupils are identified as needing a therapeutic approach to meet their emotional, mental and learning needs.

- The school works with three alternative providers. Renu Academy specialises in hair and beauty programmes, Edge-ucationoutdoors organises physical education courses and Bright Owls offers courses in modern foreign languages.
- The school's last standard inspection was in February 2016. Inspectors judged the overall effectiveness to be inadequate and many independent standards were not met. In November 2016, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) undertook a progress monitoring visit to evaluate the progress the school had made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements. HMI judged that all previously unmet standards were met. The school subsequently requested a material change to increase the pupil numbers from 12 to 20. In January 2017, inspectors found that the school was likely to meet the relevant standards if the material change was implemented.
- There have been no significant changes since the progress monitoring visit in November 2016. However, between February and November 2016 there were many changes of staff, including the appointment of a new headteacher.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was aligned with a social care inspection. Two separate reports have been produced.
- The inspector observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects. She also observed a tutorial session. In addition, the inspector looked at pupils' work and information kept by the school about pupils' learning and progress.
- The inspector toured the school premises.
- The inspector spoke with pupils and staff throughout the inspection and to seven pupils individually.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders from the Cambian Group and the headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including safeguarding procedures, curriculum documentation and a range of policies.
- The inspector spoke to an alternative provider, two virtual headteachers and the regional care manager.
- The inspector took account of five staff responses to Ofsted's questionnaire. There were not enough responses to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire for them to be viewed.

## Inspection team

Andrea Quigley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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