

Cambian Home Tree School

172 March Road, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 0LP

Inspection dates

12 to 14 February 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Good leadership and governance ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders' effective monitoring gives them an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Pupils feel safe in school because staff know them well. Accurate risk assessments and high-quality care help pupils stay safe.
- Pupils benefit from a highly personalised curriculum that effectively promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers plan interesting activities that enthuse pupils, helping them to overcome negative experiences and re-engage in learning.
- The amount of unauthorised absence has fallen significantly over the last two years.
- Staff use praise effectively to help pupils make progress against the targets in their individual learning plans. Most pupils respond admirably.
- Staff are determined to see beyond pupils' diagnoses. This builds pupils' self-esteem markedly, helping them to succeed.
- Staff support each other well. Frequent and effective communication helps keep staff informed of pupils' needs.
- Pupils' behaviour improves over time. A few pupils take longer to adapt to leaders' high expectations of how they should behave.
- Some staff are highly skilled in helping pupils to manage their behaviour. Others less so, and the behaviour of a few pupils impacts on the learning of others.
- In English and mathematics, a small proportion of pupils make less progress than they should over time.
- The acting headteacher knows how each pupil is doing but is not yet using information to identify trends and gain a clearer overall view to inform further improvements.

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?

- Improve pupils' behaviour by equipping all staff with the skills and strategies to keep pupils on task more consistently.
- Improve pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by providing them with more opportunities to write at length and addressing misconceptions in mathematics more effectively.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that information is used more precisely to guide development planning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have been successful in their ambitious vision to create an environment to provide for pupils with complex needs. The unique service provides for most pupils very well. Pupils benefit from a highly personalised curriculum, individually tailored to their needs. The longer pupils remain in the school, the better they do.
- Leaders continually adapt what they do to meet the requirements of an ever-changing cohort well. Many pupils are on short-term placements, arrive at different stages of their educational engagement, and present with significant trauma-based behaviours. Staff work closely together, demonstrating patience and resilience to meet the needs of these young people with acute mental-health conditions.
- Leaders have created a climate in which staff support and learn from each other. Pupils, many of whom have previously negative experiences of education, develop more positive attitudes, become more respectful of others' views and learn successfully.
- Communication both within and across settings is a real strength. Daily briefings, end of day reviews, and frequent discussions with key workers, social workers and clinicians give staff a clear understanding of pupils' current conditions and circumstances. This helps staff keep pupils' developmental needs and safety at the forefront of their work.
- Leaders evaluate the school's effectiveness accurately. Their monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is frequent and precise. Leaders rightly identified the need to strengthen aspects in English and mathematics owing to temporary staffing issues. They also noted some behavioural issues linked to peer relationship problems. Leaders have credible and well-considered development plans that are in place to secure improvement.
- Leaders have an ambitious curriculum vision for their pupils and have ensured that courses are flexible enough to adapt to the needs of changing cohorts. Staff collect wide-ranging information on pupils when they arrive, including emotional literacy assessment, strengths and differences questionnaires, learning and emotional resilience surveys, and physical & sensory need assessments. This helps leaders to carefully match qualifications, including entry level certificates, functional skills, GCSEs and advanced level awards to meet pupils' interests well.
- Pupils supplement their core programme of English and mathematics with other accredited qualifications in their own areas of interest, for example in forensic psychology. Pupils also complete preparation for working life courses that help them to progress successfully to the next stage of their life, such as semi-independent living.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities that help them develop both socially and emotionally. Staff arrange trips and visits carefully and link these to pupils' interests. Pupils say how rock climbing had helped to develop their confidence, while animal therapy made them think more carefully about how others are feeling.
- The interim headteacher, in place since September, knows pupils and their background stories well. Leaders have a lot of information at their disposal. While they can talk about individual cases accurately, their analysis is underdeveloped. This means they are not aware of possible trends that could better inform their development planning.

- All staff access and benefit from a full training programme to help them address pupils' different needs. Staff spoke about how they value the support from clinicians, and the specific training on attachment theory and associated behaviours, pupils' sensory issues and autism spectrum condition.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is appropriately woven through the curriculum. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to build their social and communication skills through a range of activities, including accompanied work experience placements.

Governance

- The Cambian Group (the trust) has clear structures and processes in place to provide effective governance for the school.
- Governors have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Governors monitor the quality of the school's provision thoroughly through headteacher's half-termly reports, regional education lead visits, fortnightly support visits and looking at progress against key targets. Their focus visits and minutes demonstrate that they have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and are aware of the areas that require further development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has published a suitable safeguarding policy on its website that takes account of all the latest statutory guidance.
- Identification of pupils' safeguarding needs are a crucial part of the school's work. Staff have an in-depth understanding of pupils' needs and presented behaviours. Adults are vigilant in spotting any signs that pupils are acting out of the ordinary. Staff feel confident in raising concerns, aware that these often form part of a bigger picture.
- Leaders monitor the use of restrictive physical interventions closely. If they have any doubts, cases are referred to the local authority designated officer to check the appropriateness of their usage.
- Transition procedures are used to collate information on pupils' current level of risk assessment. More than half of the pupils on roll are currently rated red, the highest level of risk on the school's internal system. This is linked to their clinical presentation and state of well-being and ensures that staff are hyper-vigilant to any risks to pupils' safety.
- The single central record is fully compliant. All of the statutory pre-employment checks are carried out and recorded carefully.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils join the school to help them overcome issues linked to their social, emotional and mental health needs. Many have a disrupted history of education or are school refusers. All have significant gaps in their learning, a number have global development delay, and many present high levels of anxiety. Staff work effectively to support pupils to re-engage in learning and build their confidence, knowledge and understanding.

- Teachers use a variety of approaches and activities effectively in order to help keep pupils interested and enthused. In English, pupils are given opportunities to draft and edit their work, so they can improve their final pieces.
- Teachers use praise extremely well, helping to motivate pupils and encouraging them to work harder and achieve more. In music, pupils' musical ability and performance skills grow as they become more confident.
- Pupils develop their literacy skills across the curriculum well. Pupils' description of their art work provides valuable reflection time for them to consider, reflect and understand their own feelings about their behaviour. In music, pupils develop their fluency in reading when singing from the autocue.
- The work in folders and books shows that teachers match the level of work to pupils' needs precisely. In art, pupils' portfolios based on the work of Frida Kahlo show how they develop their artistic skills and technique well over time.
- Where practice over time is most effective, teachers use questioning and whiteboards well to check pupils' understanding and adapt learning where there are any misconceptions.
- Some teachers are adept at reacting to pupils' changing medical and emotional conditions. When pupils' behaviour is challenging, these highly-skilled practitioners use option choices well to guide pupils to make better decisions. Not all teachers possess skills at this level, and in some classes the conduct of a few pupils disrupts the learning of others.
- Some of the work in pupils' books, specifically in mathematics and English, shows that a few pupils do not make consistently good progress over time. There are occasions where pupils' misconceptions are not addressed, their work does not build on prior learning, and there are too few opportunities to practise extended writing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The passionate determination of staff to support highly vulnerable pupils is clear. The school has educated around 235 pupils since opening in 2015. Staff are flexible and continually adjust their methodology to address the underlying reasons behind pupils' presented behaviours.
- The sessions pupils have with their key worker provide valuable support by looking at every aspect of each pupil's welfare. Key workers look at pupils' attendance, targets, including any in education, health and care (EHC) plans, and arrange support that helps pupils develop socially, emotionally and academically.
- Leaders and staff are aware of pupils' diagnoses and needs through pupils' detailed care plan assessments. Pupils have systematic reflection sessions built into their timetables to give them useful opportunities to reflect on their behaviour and help them become more successful learners.
- Pupils often take extreme risks linked to their own health and safety. Each pupil has their own risk assessment plan, covering presented behaviours, predisposing, precipitating and perpetuating factors, protective and risk management factors, and future plans. Alongside

task-specific risk assessments, staff use this clear guidance to manage risks to pupils' safety extremely well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- All pupils attend either the tier 4 acute mental health assessment unit (Cambian Willows) or the tier 3 step-down unit at the school. Pupils' diagnoses include personality disorder, bipolar, autistic spectrum condition, attachment disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The mental state and well-being of the pupils profoundly impacts on their behaviours. It also means that there are numerous and rapid cohort changes, with many pupils only attending on a short-term basis.
- Overall attendance figures vary from as high as 89% to as low as 57%. Pupils are often unable to attend school owing to their mental health needs. Leaders have made improvements on a case-by-case basis for pupils who previously had exceptionally high rates of non-attendance.
- Staff provide a welcoming learning environment, exemplified by the high-quality display of pupils' work. Alongside the high expectations of staff, this encourages pupils to work hard and do their best.
- While exclusions are rare, these have increased noticeably of late. In some subject areas, where peer relationships are fragile, pupils' conduct can disrupt the learning of others. Some pupils feel behaviour standards have declined and cite the causes as the recent growth in pupil numbers and the difficulties some pupils face in adjusting to their new surroundings. Leaders know this and have clear plans in place to secure improvements.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Between September 2016 to December 2018, there has been a total of 141 pupils on roll. Pupils stay at the Willow Hospital unit for an average duration of 6 weeks, while only one third of pupils remain at the school for longer than a term. Of the 28 pupils enrolled at the school in the autumn term this year, 23 were new to the setting.
- When pupils join the school, the stabilisation phase helps them to adjust to their new setting. Typically, pupils make less progress in this phase than other pupils who are more familiar with staff and their surroundings.
- The school's effective therapeutic model helps pupils stabilise their behaviour, reduce the risks they present to their safety, develop their skills and prepare them to transition to their next placement well.
- Teachers assess pupils extensively in order to identify the gaps in their learning and their preferred learning styles. They plan highly individualised lessons effectively that help most pupils to catch up, build on their prior knowledge, and make good progress in their learning.
- The vast majority of pupils make at least good progress from their starting points. Leaders monitor pupils' progress closely. Pupils who remain in school for more extended periods do better.
- Staff employ a range of approaches to support pupils, and their rates of progress must be

seen fully in the context of their individual needs. The inspector looked at each pupil's progress, cross-referenced against their medical records. This shows that most pupils show good levels of improvement from their various starting points.

- Pupils have a personal careers action plan that provides them with an individualised programme bespoke to their needs. This guides pupils effectively to the next stage of education, employment, training or semi-independent living.
- Pupils achieve a range of qualifications, including advanced level qualifications, GCSEs, functional skills and entry-level certificates. These help pupils to successfully progress to appropriate settings when they leave.
- Inspectors noted a few occasions where teachers do not display the detailed subject knowledge to guide pupils effectively or give them sufficient practice in key skills. As a result, a few pupils make less progress than they should.

School details

Unique reference number	141879
DfE registration number	873/6052
Inspection number	10056571

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	12 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Chair	Anne Marie Carrie
Interim headteacher	Melanie Higgs
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,500
Telephone number	0800 138 1184
Website	www.cambiangroup.com/childrensservices/specialisteducationservices/esddayschools.aspx
Email address	education@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	7 to 9 June 2016

Information about this school

- Cambian Home Tree School is an independent co-educational day school which specialises in accommodating up to 25 students (12 to 18) who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Some pupils are in-patients at Cambian Willows Hospital, a tier 4 acute mental health assessment unit.
- Most pupils have missed significant periods of education prior to joining the school. The proportion of pupils who arrive or leave part way through the school year is high.
- The school provides different learning environments to cater for alternative ways of learning. Pupils follow individually tailored educational pathways and the teaching team is

further supported by a multidisciplinary team, including a psychologist, occupational therapist and therapeutic practitioners.

- The school was previously inspected in June 2016. Since the previous inspection, the previous headteacher has been promoted to the regional educational lead, Since September, the deputy headteacher has been the interim headteacher.
- The school is located in a listed building on the edge of the Cambridgeshire fenland village of Friday Bridge, near Wisbech.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There are currently 23 pupils on roll.
- Pupils are placed by local authorities from across the country.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning across lessons and year groups. Observations were carried out jointly with either the regional education lead or the interim headteacher.
- A tour of the school was made to check compliance against the independent school standards. A visit and tour were also made to the Cambian Willows site.
- The inspector looked carefully at the quality of work in pupils' books to assess progress and teaching over time.
- There were no responses to the online parental questionnaire, Parent View, the pupil questionnaire or the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector met with the regional education lead, the interim headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of staff, a group of pupils and the regional manager. The inspector also held a telephone conversation with the trust's national social, emotional, and mental health lead. The inspector analysed and scrutinised the school's self-evaluation documentation, which included evidence from governors' minutes, school policies and progress information.
- The inspector also considered emails from key stakeholders, including a senior social worker and a practice manager working for local authorities who place pupils at the school.
- The inspector examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils in the school.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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