

Inspection of Cambian Somerset School

Creech Court, Mill Lane, Creech St Michael, Taunton, Somerset TA3 5PX

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils blossom at this caring and happy school. Staff nurture pupils well and pupils feel valued and safe. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils learn to value their education because staff help them experience success.

Leaders focus on making sure everyone understands pupils' needs. Staff promote inclusion effectively. They deliver regular, targeted therapeutic and academic support to enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils benefit from tailored provision that meets their needs well.

Pupils can present with complex and difficult behaviour. However, clear expectations and routines help to secure a calm and friendly atmosphere. When pupils do present with challenging behaviours, staff know what to do and calm things quickly. Pupils' behaviour improves rapidly over time. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Everyone gets on well together. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem and, when it does happen, staff deal with it quickly. Leaders ensure that the whole community has high expectations of pupils. Many parents praise the school and say it has transformed their children's lives.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have high expectations for what they want pupils to achieve. They aim to help pupils to believe in themselves, value their education and develop the independence to succeed as they move into adulthood. Leaders are clear that each child needs exactly the right curriculum to suit their individual learning requirements. They make sure they use the information from pupils' individual education, health and care plans to deliver the support that pupils need. Pupils appreciate the caring environment that has been created for them.

Leaders have constructed an ambitious academic curriculum that covers the scope and expectation of the national curriculum. Many subject leaders are appropriately skilled and have the level of knowledge needed to ensure that their subjects are planned cohesively. Some subjects are further on than others. Where they are strong, subject leaders have used their knowledge to sequence learning based on what they want pupils to remember. Where they are less developed, the use of assessment is overly focused on what pupils will produce or learn at the end of a project. This means gaps in pupils' knowledge sometimes go unnoticed. This slows the progress that pupils make.

Staff deliver the intended curriculum effectively. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Teachers use praise effectively in order to support pupils to succeed and develop pride in their work and learning. Lessons are calm and orderly

as a result. Pupils want to do well because they recognise that teachers are supporting them effectively.

Leaders know that reading is important for pupils. They have made it a priority. For example, pupils now have daily reading lessons. Leaders have also created a new library. Some pupils are enthusiastic about the chance to read books there. Leaders have also purchased a new published scheme to support the teaching of early readers. This is beginning to have an impact. However, some teachers are not as confident in teaching early reading as others. Leaders recognise that this is a priority moving forwards.

The wider curriculum promotes pupils' character, independence and self-esteem effectively. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. They are encouraged to be responsible and active citizens. For example, they learn about why recycling is important, what healthy relationships look like and why it is good to live in a diverse community. Careers education is woven within the curriculum and starts early. Pupils learn about the attributes needed to be successful in different walks of life.

Extra-curricular activities such as field trips and clubs extend pupils learning well. For example, pupils speak enthusiastically about times they have visited Bristol cathedral, museums and galleries. Staff promote pupils' independence well. This includes securing opportunities to develop life skills through work experience. Pupils understand each other and older pupils are positive role models for their younger peers. They engage very well in lessons and contribute positively to the life of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take safeguarding very seriously. They follow their safeguarding policy carefully, which is published on the school website. Leaders know pupils and their families very well. Staff keep in touch with parents, so concerns are discussed immediately. Leaders ensure that staff are appropriately trained. Staff document any safeguarding concerns diligently.

Leaders make appropriate checks on the suitability of staff. They record the checks they make vigilantly on a single central register.

Pupils have lots of opportunities in the curriculum to learn about keeping safe. For example, they learn about the risks they face when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils learn the curriculum well. However, the use of assessment in some subjects is overly focused on outcomes and skills. This means that gaps in pupils'

knowledge are not consistently identified and filled. Leaders need to ensure that all subject leaders use their subject knowledge to develop assessment that focuses on the knowledge they want pupils to remember.

- Leaders have raised the profile of reading in the school. There are now useful strategies that focus on improving pupils' reading. Leaders have started to improve how they teach pupils who still need to learn phonics. However, some staff are more confident than others. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and confidence to implement the new early reading strategy effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	131455
DfE registration number	933/6211
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10212878
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Childcare Ltd
Chair	Farouq Sheikh
Headteacher	Louisa Jessep
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,500 to £80,500
Telephone number	01823 443133
Website	www.cambiangroup.com/childrensservices/specialisteducationservices/esddayschools.aspx
Email address	somersetschooloffice@cambiangroup.com
Dates of previous inspection	14 to 16 March 2018

Information about this school

- Cambian Somerset School is an independent special school. The school is part of the Cambian group, which provides specialist education and behavioural health services for children.
- The main school premises are located on the edge of the village of Creech St Michael, Somerset.
- Most pupils have autism spectrum disorder. Many have a range of additional social, emotional and mental health needs. Typically, pupils join the school after a period away from education or a series of unsuccessful placements in other schools.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are placed at the school by their respective local authority.
- The school does use six alternative providers. They are ROC, Project 1, REACH, EAQ, Inspire SouthWest and Wings Enabling.
- The last standard inspection of the school was in March 2018. An additional inspection was carried out in July 2019, when it was found that all standards were met.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was the first routine inspection of the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with senior and curriculum leaders, including the interim headteacher. Inspectors also met with representatives from the Cambian Group, including the operational director who acts as the chair of governors at the school. Inspectors discussed leaders' evaluations, priorities for improvement, systems for monitoring and accountability, as well as the curriculum.
- Inspectors did deep dives into four subjects: English, mathematics, physical education and personal, social and health education. Inspectors met with senior and subject leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors also visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work and talked to pupils. Inspectors reviewed some subject planning and spoke to leaders about other subjects. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised feedback from 7 free-text responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parents' survey.

- Inspectors analysed school documentation, including leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement, external reports and paperwork relating to the work of those who govern the school. Inspectors scrutinised a range of policies and procedures, including those that relate to the curriculum.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by meeting with the designated safeguarding lead, the school administrator and the interim headteacher. Inspectors reviewed safer recruitment processes, speaking to staff and to pupils. Inspectors analysed safeguarding procedures relating to the use of alternative provision. Inspectors also scrutinised school policies, governance arrangements, records of concern and links to other agencies.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Greenwood

Ofsted Inspector

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