

# Inspection of Bridge School

C/o Cambian Education, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, Metropolitan House, 3 Darke Lane, Potters Bar, EN6 1AG

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Inspection dates: 5 to 7 April 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Sixth-form provision

**Insufficient evidence**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Most pupils who attend this school have previously struggled to engage in education. The school's peaceful and welcoming environment and beautiful surroundings help pupils with social and emotional anxieties feel calm and relaxed. All staff focus on pupils' well-being alongside learning, showing genuine care and compassion. Consequently, pupils attend well and say they enjoy school.

Pupils access opportunities successfully by achieving relevant qualifications in basic skills. The curriculum focuses on developing pupils' knowledge and skills in English and mathematics. While this helps to prepare pupils for their next steps, they do not learn enough in other subjects. This is because some teachers do not have the expertise to ensure learning is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities.

Pupils' behaviour is positive and lets learning happen. Pupils say that bullying is unusual. Some pupils struggle to form positive relationships with others but staff help them to make friends and understand and resolve differences.

Classroom learning is enriched with off-site opportunities. Pupils gain experiences in health and social care, hairdressing and childcare. This helps them to make informed decisions about their future career choices.

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

Pupils usually attend the school on a short-term placement. It is rare for them to remain longer than an academic year. Leaders place high emphasis on helping pupils to secure qualifications in English and mathematics to equip them for future learning. In these subjects, teachers have thought about what they need to teach and when they need to teach it. Regular checks on pupils' learning help to identify those who need extra help. Teachers know the areas that need revision. They make sure that pupils can practise spelling, punctuation, grammar and basic number skills across other subjects. This means that pupils can remember more because they can apply this knowledge in other areas of the curriculum.

In other subjects, particularly personal, social and health education (PSHE) and science, teachers have not considered the content of the curriculum well enough because they lack subject knowledge and expertise. This results in disconnected lessons that do not build on pupils' prior learning. In PSHE, for example, the learning is not planned in a logical sequence.

In science, the work is not covered in sufficient depth. Teachers have chosen topics that do not connect, making it difficult for pupils to link new learning to what they already know. This leads to wider gaps in knowledge because the work is not well matched to pupils' needs and abilities.

All pupils arrive with gaps in their learning. Some have specific learning plans to address this. Teachers use this information to personalise learning. However, the

curriculum content is not meeting pupils' needs and abilities. Pupils are free to suggest and choose topics they would like to study. While this promotes interest and engagement for some, it does not help other pupils to build on what they already know.

Many pupils join the school as reluctant readers. Leaders encourage reading for pleasure through promoting the reading of fictional texts. However, pupils still do not read widely enough. Current reading choices of some pupils include gangs, prisons and crime. Pupils say they enjoy the content. This does not, however, enable them to appreciate a range of different genres. The limited choice of texts also limits pupils' understanding of literature and the wider world.

Pupils behave and attend well. They arrive on time ready to engage in learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. The small school setting means that staff know pupils well and understand their social and emotional needs. Staff respond appropriately when pupils need additional support. Pupils say that they struggle to get along with others at times, but teachers help them to overcome their differences and to get along better.

The school's approach to relationships and sex education is carefully planned given the needs of the cohort and the specialism of the school. This content is considered jointly with the clinical team to ensure that pupils access key learning at a point that is appropriate for them.

Opportunities beyond the taught curriculum are rich and purposeful. The school engages with several alternative providers. These placements are well thought out and linked to pupils' future aspirations. These experiences, linked with impartial careers advice and employability sessions, help to prepare pupils for their next steps in education or employment and training.

Governance of the school is overseen by the Cambian Childcare Ltd. The proprietor has made sure that the school complies with the independent school standards. The school meets its statutory requirements, including those of the Equality Act 2010. Checks on how the curriculum is taught have not been frequent enough to make sure that planned learning meets the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. This negatively impacts on pupils' knowledge and understanding and means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are suitably trained and know their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe. They are quick to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm and take swift action where necessary. Nothing is left to chance when it comes to safety. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They know about online dangers and risks and how to report them.

The safeguarding policy is written with due regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Copies are available upon request because the school does not have a website.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Some of the curriculum content is not well delivered because teachers lack the necessary expertise and subject knowledge to do this effectively. This means that learning is not covered in sufficient depth. Leaders need to make sure that all staff have the necessary subject knowledge and teaching expertise to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff need to make sure that pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Some subjects are not coherently planned. This means that pupils' learning is disconnected and does not link to what they already know. Pupils struggle to make connections in their learning and do not learn as well as they could. Leaders need to review the curriculum to make sure that learning is sequentially planned so that pupils can build on their prior knowledge and skills.
- The current range of texts used to promote reading for pleasure is limited. Pupils read fictional texts, some of which contain inappropriate themes that do not develop their wider understanding of the world. Leaders need to review the reading resources on offer so that pupils have access to a wider range of genre.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140227
<b>DfE registration number</b>	893/6032
<b>Local authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10205096
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent School
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	5
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	0
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Cambian Childcare Ltd.
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Sutherland
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tonia Lewis
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£33,150
<b>Telephone number</b>	01746 860379
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.cambianguroup.com/cambianguroup.aspx">http://www.cambianguroup.com/cambianguroup.aspx</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:Tonia.Lewis@cambianguroup.com">Tonia.Lewis@cambianguroup.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27–29 June 2017

## Information about this school

- The school offers places to girls aged 11 to 18 who have experienced significant trauma. Places are commissioned by several local authorities. Bridge School is part of the Cambian Group.
- The school has three spacious learning areas, a kitchen and an outdoor sports court. The school makes use of five alternative providers. All of which are inspected separately by Ofsted.
- The school was last inspected in June 2017 when it was judged to be good, with outstanding personal development, behaviour and welfare.

## 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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including reading, mathematics, science and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors talked about the curriculum with subject leaders, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. It was not possible to visit lessons due to enrichment activities taking place. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about other subjects.
- At the time of this inspection, there were no students in the sixth form. As a result, it was not possible to evaluate the quality of education and provision.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads and reviewed the school's processes for managing concerns. The school's single central record was also scrutinised to review checks made on staff prior to them commencing employment at the school.
- The lead inspector checked the premises to make sure they complied with the independent school standards. Key policies were also reviewed including those for safeguarding, behaviour, complaints, health and safety, first aid and risk assessment. The school's accessibility plan was also checked.

## Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector      Ofsted Inspector

Alexander Laney

Her Majesty's Inspector

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