

Inspection of Cambian Devon School

Intek House, 52 Borough Road, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7DQ

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs or autism spectrum disorder. Some pupils settle in well and benefit from aspects of the curriculum, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. However, a significant proportion of pupils do not integrate successfully. They spend long periods of time on part-time timetables. Many placements break down altogether.

Some pupils access very little face-to-face learning. Their opportunities to work and socialise with others are limited. The school does not provide a broad enough curriculum or a wide enough range of experiences for these pupils.

There is a second site at Buckfastleigh where some pupils enjoy outdoor learning and work towards vocational qualifications. A small number of pupils spend some of their time attending college, engaging in land-based and creative activities or volunteering for local charities. Where these experiences are made available to pupils, they contribute well to their personal development.

Pupils who attend school regularly behave respectfully towards one another. Leaders address any bullying quickly. In some subjects, staff help pupils to develop resilience. Teaching staff work closely with pupils to guide their learning. However, some pupils become overly reliant on this. Some do not learn to think for themselves.

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

Leaders have developed a structured curriculum for pupils to follow in each subject. The curriculum includes some ambitious content. However, it does not fully provide for pupils' needs. For example, leaders know that writing is very weak across the school. The curriculum encourages writing, but it does not help pupils to develop fluent handwriting or to spell accurately. Consequently, pupils continue to find writing very difficult. This reduces the chance that pupils will be successful later with qualifications such as GCSEs.

The arrangements to help pupils in the early stages of reading are insufficient. Leaders suspect that many pupils have gaps in their phonic knowledge, but they do not check for this. The approach to helping pupils to catch up is not systematic enough. Leaders cannot give a clear account of their arrangements to support pupils. Some pupils receive extra literacy classes. However, these are not provided regularly enough and do not include the phonics teaching which many pupils require. As a result, pupils' reading does not improve quickly enough.

The curriculum for each pupil is different. Where pupils find it difficult to learn in a small group, they attend school only part time or not at all. Some of the youngest pupils attend school the least. Leaders can admit pupils from the age of seven, but the curriculum provided to pupils in key stage 2 does not enable them to catch up quickly. These pupils access very little specialist teaching in English. Their limited

timetables mean that they do not study a broad curriculum or any subject in sufficient depth.

Pupils in key stage 4 who struggle to manage their behaviour are moved onto remote learning arrangements. These pupils lose access to the curriculum elements they enjoyed at the Buckfastleigh site. There is some effective use of alternative provision. Some pupils have success attending other local specialist settings. Leaders provide online lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) for some pupils, but their engagement is poor.

Leaders arrange work packs for pupils learning remotely. Outreach staff take some pupils to public spaces, such as the library or gym, where they work through the curriculum. Leaders do not monitor the impact of these arrangements well enough. The work packs are not well matched to pupils' needs and are a poor representation of the curriculum taught in school. Consequently, pupils' engagement is poor and staff express a sense of pointlessness around the process.

Most pupils join the school following unsuccessful and disjointed experiences of education. Parents are hopeful that this specialist setting will be able to meet their child's needs. Leaders work with parents to plan the support their child will receive. However, there is a disconnect between the expectations of parents and leaders. Some parents are frustrated by the limitations leaders place on what their child can access. A characteristic of the school is that many pupils do not access the curriculum elements they need or are likely to enjoy. This causes pupils' motivation to dwindle.

Pupils do not attend well. This impedes their ability to learn the curriculum further. Leaders maintain appropriate records around attendance but they do not take account of patterns and trends. They do not fully understand how different curriculum arrangements impact upon pupils' attendance. This makes it difficult for leaders to act strategically to improve overall rates of attendance. Leaders discuss their concerns about the attendance of individual pupils with parents. They try to resolve any barriers but are reluctant to challenge parents robustly when necessary.

Leaders have developed detailed plans to support the teaching of PSHE. The curriculum includes the required elements of relationships and sex education. However, the curriculum is at an early stage of implementation. Pupils have started to learn the content, but they still have gaps in their knowledge and some misconceptions. Leaders broaden pupils' knowledge of others and the world through 'cultural days'. Older pupils, including those who learn remotely, receive helpful independent careers advice.

Most staff have confidence in the school's leaders. Staff feel well supported with their workload and well-being. However, a minority of staff identify examples of low standards around behaviour management and record-keeping.

The proprietor provides a range of supportive services to the school. This helps school leaders to manage their responsibilities. The headteacher receives useful

support from a representative of the proprietor, who visits the school regularly. Together, leaders have ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and that the school is a safe place, where pupils' health, safety and well-being are promoted.

However, the proprietor does not do enough to hold leaders to account for how well the provision meets pupils' needs. Insufficient attention has been given to pupils' attendance and the various part-time and remote learning packages that leaders arrange. The proprietor does not know enough about the provision, including the school's curriculum and how well pupils access this. Consequently, the school does not meet the requirements set out in parts 1, 2 and 8 of the independent school standards.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a good awareness of the risks in pupils' lives and the potential impact of these. Staff receive effective safeguarding training when they join the school. They report their concerns through a robust system. Leaders make appropriate referrals where necessary. They share information, collaborate well and seek advice from safeguarding partners.

Staff are well prepared to manage any risks associated with pupils' behaviour in the light of their individual needs. They appreciate that the pupils who attend this school are particularly vulnerable, for example, to exploitation or radicalisation. Staff are vigilant and knowledgeable about these possibilities.

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

- The school's aim is to cater specifically for the needs of pupils with SEND. However, it does not meet the needs of these pupils well enough. Leaders have a low success rate in re-engaging pupils with education. They are not ambitious for every pupil. Too many placements break down. Leaders should adapt and develop the provision so that it meets the needs of pupils more effectively.
- A significant proportion of pupils attend only part time or a limited curriculum is provided to them remotely. Too often, these arrangements are in place for prolonged periods. This causes the already significant gaps in pupils' learning to widen further. Leaders must ensure that any part-time or remote provision is short lived and in the best interests of pupils.
- The remote curriculum lacks coherence and rigour. The work provided is not well matched to pupils' capabilities and needs. Consequently, pupils who learn remotely engage with a narrow range of subjects. They are not able to deepen their knowledge and make progress. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum offered remotely is meaningful and motivating to pupils.

- Leaders recognise that pupils have fallen behind with their reading and writing. However, they have not prioritised the curriculum content pupils need to address these gaps. Pupils who need to catch up do not spend enough time learning a phonics curriculum or developing the transcription skills needed for fluent writing. Leaders should design a curriculum that helps pupils to catch up quickly.
- The majority of pupils miss too much school. Expectations of how well pupils will attend are too low. There is a reluctance to challenge families. Leaders do not fully understand the attendance information they record. As a result, their strategic oversight is weak and their actions are unfocused. Leaders should raise their expectations of, and develop a systematic approach to analysing, pupils' attendance.
- The proprietor has not identified important weaknesses in the school. School leaders, who work with parents to decide how best to support pupils, do not receive necessary support and challenge from the proprietor with regard to their decision-making. The proprietor must hold leaders to account robustly for the quality of education provided to each pupil.

How can I feed back my views?

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

School details

Unique reference number	135803
DfE registration number	878/6213
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10239791
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Number of part-time pupils	8
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Chair	Farouq Sheikh
Headteacher	Pamela Husbands
Annual fees (day pupils)	£61,802
Telephone number	01803 524537
Website	www.cambiangroup.com/specialist-education/our-schools/semh-schools/cambian-devon-school/
Email address	pamela.husbands@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	3 to 5 July 2018

Information about this school

- The last standard inspection took place in July 2018. In April 2019, there was a material change to the provision following an inspection in which the school was permitted to admit pupils from the age of seven. Since then, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed.
- The school operates on two sites. The main school site is Cambian Devon School, 52 Borough Road, Paignton, TQ4 7DQ. In addition, the school has premises at Cambian Devon School, Oaklands Park, Buckfastleigh, Devon, TQ11 OBW. At the second site, the school provides outdoor and vocational education. The school transports pupils between the two sites.
- Cambian Devon School is a specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and pupils with autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have education, health and care plans. Their placements are funded by Devon local authority.
- The school is included on the list of approved independent special schools in accordance with section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision: Combe Pafford School and The Husbandry School.
- Although the school is permitted to accept pupils aged between seven and 18, there are currently no pupils on roll in the sixth form.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the proprietor by video link. In addition, the lead inspector discussed the school with a representative of Devon local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English (with a focus on reading), PSHE, science and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited available lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors spoke with leaders about the curriculum provided to pupils remotely and considered samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited the second site at Buckfastleigh to consider the outdoor and vocational educational offer there.
- Inspectors checked the safety and suitability of the premises at both sites. They considered risk assessments and the policies in place to promote the well-being of pupils.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors held discussions with the deputy headteacher (who is also the designated safeguarding lead), the headteacher and a wide range of teaching and support staff. The lead inspector considered the single central record and the school's wider processes for safer recruitment. Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils to gather their views of the culture of the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. In addition, inspectors spoke with some parents on the telephone and considered responses to the school's own survey for parents. Inspectors also took into account the responses to the online surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Leanne Thirlby

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 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.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(i) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.

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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