

Inspection of Cambian Potterspury Lodge School

Potterspury Lodge, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 7LL

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 March 2023

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 at Potterspurty Lodge have not always had the best start to their educational careers. Here, they get a second chance. Many pupils grab this fresh opportunity with both hands. They thrive.

Pupils say they are happy and feel safe. There are many well-trained adults that they can talk with should they have a worry or problem. Rare incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and fairly. There is a calm atmosphere around the school. Staff are skilled in managing pupils' sometimes challenging behaviours. Relationships are warm and positive. Staff know and care for the pupils very well.

Leaders and staff have high expectations. Pupils rise to this challenge. They have positive attitudes to their learning. They work hard and take an active role in lessons. Pupils earn appropriate qualifications and move onto college or further training. They are ready for their next steps.

Many parents and carers have positive views of the school. Parents typically commented that 'there are very supportive, understanding and knowledgeable staff' and that 'We've got our child back. They are so happy now.'

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

Leaders have begun to design an appropriate and well-sequenced curriculum. In key stages 3 and 4, in each subject, it is clear what pupils should learn and when. In key stage 2, pupils learn appropriate content. However, leaders have yet to precisely link pupils' learning in the key stage 2 subjects with what is to come in key stage 3.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain tasks calmly and carefully. Pupils respond well to the very small class sizes. They like the attentiveness of staff, who are quick to help if they need extra support or resources.

Pupils often arrive having missed significant parts of their previous education. Therefore, teachers spend time finding out what pupils know and where their knowledge gaps are. This assessment work is well thought out and done well.

Teachers regularly check how well pupils are progressing through their current curriculum. They do this through careful questioning in lessons and the frequent revisiting of learned material. Through this careful checking, the appropriate curriculum and effective teaching, pupils achieve well.

Not all pupils enjoy reading. However, they can all read effectively. This enables them to access the full curriculum. Pupils' reading books are at an appropriate level of challenge. In English, for example, pupils are successfully learning about 'Animal Farm', 'Macbeth' and 'An Inspector Calls'. There are frequent opportunities to read, including during tutor time or after lunch. Leaders are developing pupils' love of reading and books through updating the school library.

Pupils' behaviour and attendance improve considerably when compared to their experiences in their previous school or setting. Leaders have robust procedures in place for checking on any absences. They undertake home visits to follow up any unexplained absences. This work helps to ensure that pupils are safe.

Leaders consider pupils' personal development as a priority. The related curriculum is strong. There are opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths and cultures and how to stay physically and mentally healthy. Pupils learn how to contribute positively to the local community and the wider world. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. They receive effective careers advice and guidance. This work is preparing them well for life in modern Britain. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests.

Leaders ensure that detailed work is undertaken to determine pupils' specific learning and behaviour needs. Staff, including the clinical staff, are involved in deciding about any extra help that pupils require. This carefully considered approach means that pupils receive the support and guidance that they need.

Senior leaders are knowledgeable and committed. They lead by example. They are each clear about their roles and responsibilities. They lead their specific area with confidence and self-assurance. Decisions have a clear rationale and are made with the best interests of the pupils at heart.

The proprietor carefully checks the work of the principal and other leaders. There are robust procedures in place that mean leaders are held fully to account for their actions. The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards are met. For example, the building is maintained to a good standard and rigorous checks are in place to ensure the health and safety of staff and pupils. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The safeguarding policy is available on the school website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have received effective safeguarding training. They are aware of the potential signs of abuse and neglect. Safeguarding concerns and the actions taken are recorded well. When it is required, safeguarding leaders are tenacious in chasing up outside agencies so that pupils get the right support. Consequently, pupils and their families receive the help that they need.

Leaders have rigorous recruitment procedures in place.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. These include when online. They are knowledgeable regarding the dangers of alcohol and drug misuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have yet to link the precise subject knowledge, skills and vocabulary the pupils learn in key stage 2 with the subject content that is to come in key stage 3. Leaders are therefore unclear how each subject curriculum progresses as pupils travel through the school. Leaders should ensure that the subject content in key stage 2 is clearly mapped and sequenced so that pupils' progression in each subject is clear as they move into key stage 3.
- Pupils do not benefit from a wide enough variety of experiences. They are limited in the number of opportunities available to them to follow their passions. This can limit how well pupils progress in their personal development. Leaders should seek to provide increased opportunities for pupils to follow their talents and interests, therefore improving their overall educational experience during their time at the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	122136
DfE registration number	941/6039
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10266723
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Proprietor	Cambian Autism Services Ltd
Chair	Farooq Sheikh
Principal	Jenny Nimmo
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,779 to £87,484
Telephone number	01908 542912
Website	www.cambiangroup.com/specialist-education/our-schools/asperger-schools/potterspurry-lodge-school/
Email address	jenny.nimmo@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 February 2020

Information about this school

- The school is registered to provide education for up to 64 pupils aged eight to 18. There are currently 36 pupils on roll.
- At the time of the inspection there were no sixth-form students on roll.
- The school caters for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many pupils have autism spectrum disorder and a range of behavioural, social, emotional and mental-health difficulties.
- The school's previous standard inspection was from 25 to 27 February 2020. The school was judged to be good in all areas. The school underwent an emergency

inspection in February 2022. All the independent school standards that were checked were met during this inspection.

- The school uses the services of two unregistered providers.

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 has 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.
- The Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to carry out the standard inspection earlier in the inspection cycle than previously planned. This was due to concerns raised with the DfE related to pupils' welfare.
- Inspectors held various meetings with the principal and other school leaders. A telephone call was held with the proprietor. Other meetings were held with a selection of staff and pupils from all key stages.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics, science and the key stage 2 curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documents, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Curriculum documents and pupils' workbooks were scrutinised in some foundation subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector checked the single central record and scrutinised safeguarding records. Checks were made on staff training and staff's knowledge of the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's staff, parent and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Peter Stonier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Simon Hollingsworth

His Majesty's Inspector

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