

Inspection of Oakwood School

c/o Cambian Education, Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar,
Hertfordshire EN6 1AG

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 November 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 Oakwood school are given the opportunity to thrive. All staff share a moral purpose to help the pupils be the best they can be. This starts as soon as the pupils arrive. Often pupils arrive at the school after experiencing turbulent periods of education. Leaders understand this and ensure that pupils are supported to feel safe and settle quickly, through building strong and nurturing relationships.

Leaders are passionate about ensuring that pupils have the knowledge and skills to be successful in life. As soon as the pupils arrive, leaders put in place an ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of the pupils. Learning is adapted to reflect pupils' gaps but also to build on their strengths.

Pupils are taught how to regulate their behaviour and emotions. Well-trained staff know and understand potential triggers and skilfully support pupils to manage difficult situations.

There are a wide range of activities that develop pupils' interests. For example, music is used as a way to support pupils' communication across the curriculum. Pupils were keen to share their raps that they had written about history and for the Christmas play.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious and adapted to reflect the needs of the individual pupils. As soon as pupils arrive, leaders carefully check what they can and cannot do and adapt learning accordingly. On the occasions where pupils find it difficult to focus, teachers will take a 'time out' from learning, but then always return when the pupil is ready to focus. This means no learning is missed.

Pupils study a broad curriculum, including English, mathematics and science, as well as a range of other subjects, such as art, Spanish, history, music and personal, social and health and economic (PSHE) education. In addition to this, there are opportunities to learn other skills, such as British Sign Language. However, some of the subjects on offer have been affected by recent staffing changes. If a subject expert leaves, the school does not always ensure that there is sufficient subject expertise to teach that subject. While this does not impact the core subjects, at times this does impact the quality of the other subjects.

All staff understand the individual needs of the pupils. Most pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that there is a balance between academic challenge and providing nurture and therapeutic support. All staff are skilled in supporting pupils with SEND and ensuring that barriers to learning are removed.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Staff are trained in supporting pupils at the early stages of reading. All pupils read regularly and are positive about the new

school library that was designed by the school council. Pupils get a variety of opportunities to apply their reading skills. For example, as part of the school's Remembrance Day events, pupils went to the local war memorial and read 'In Flanders Fields'.

Pupils behave well. They are taught what positive behaviour looks like and this is modelled by all staff. Staff ensure that routines are clear and consistent, for example the way pupils are welcomed to school every day follows the same routine to allow them to have a settled start to the school day.

The school ensures that pupils have a variety of opportunities to learn about life beyond the classroom. Pupils take an active role in their community through events, such as charity cake sales for the local food bank and donating produce from the school's allotment. This supports pupils' understanding of citizenship and being part of a community. Pupils learn about and show respect for different cultures and traditions.

Leaders ensure that pupils have extensive opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They learn how to use technology responsibly, including how to keep safe online. Relationship and sex education is threaded throughout the curriculum. This supports pupils to learn about what constitutes healthy relationships.

All pupils have the opportunity to receive independent careers advice to help them consider their future careers. However, some pupils find it difficult to engage with the current programme as the programme is not structured into small manageable steps. This means the pupils find it difficult to discuss their ambitions and aims for the future.

Staff are proud to work at the school and say it is a privilege to work with the pupils. They value the training they receive, including in safeguarding and behaviour management.

The proprietor has ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. There are systems in place to hold leaders to account for the performance of the school. They consider staff and leaders' workload and well-being.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Due to staffing changes, there is some variability in how well the foundation subjects are taught as some staff do not have secure subject knowledge in these subjects. This means that pupils do not develop a deep understanding in these subjects. Leaders need to ensure that staff are well trained to teach the subjects on offer, so that pupils can continue to learn and make progress.
- The opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of careers and further qualifications are not as wide as they could be. This means that some opportunities are missed to develop pupils' self-confidence and to enhance their understanding and interest in careers and future aspirations. Leaders should consider ways to offer pupils a range of tailored curriculum opportunities that celebrate pupils' success and support their interests and career aspirations.

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	131033
DfE registration number	893/6097
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10284424
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	3
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Childcare Ltd
Chair	Andrew Sutherland
Headteacher	Louise Curel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£49,246
Telephone number	0800 138 1184
Website	www.cambiangroup.com/childrensservices/specialisteducationservices
Email address	Louise.Curel@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 February 2020

Information about this school

- The school offers places to pupils who have experienced significant trauma. Oakwood School is part of the Cambian Group.
- There have been several changes of headteacher and school-level leadership since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up her post in January 2023. There is also a regional executive headteacher, who has supported the school since 2021.
- Pupils are placed at the school by several local authorities across England.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.
- The school does not have a website. Hard copies of policies and other documents are available on request.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher, executive headteacher, deputy headteacher and other curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, English, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor company.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and

considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors took the responses to Ofsted Parent View into account. Ofsted's staff survey was also considered.
- The inspection team toured the school premises, examined policies and associated documentation, and spoke to staff to consider whether the school meets the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Eve Morris, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Martin Spoor

Ofsted Inspector

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