Inspection of Cambian Whinfell School

110 Windermere Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5EZ

Inspection dates:	25 to 27 March 2025

Overall effectiveness	**Outstanding**
The quality of education	**Outstanding**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Outstanding**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	**Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Cambian Whinfell School places no limit on what pupils can achieve. The school has the highest expectations for pupils. Pupils do all they can to rise to the challenge. They learn with success because the school knows their individual needs so well. Staff expertly support pupils to feel able to 'have a go', take risks and believe in themselves.

Pupils learn a highly ambitious curriculum that reflects their talents and interests. For most pupils, this is their first successful experience of education. Pupils who previously found it difficult to engage with education now show very impressive attitudes to their learning. They know that staff care deeply about them, including their emotional well-being and academic achievement. This helps them to grow in confidence and develop highly respectful attitudes towards others.

Parents and carers, and other professionals, consider the school to be transformational. Pupils develop the essential life skills that they need to leave the school as resilient and independent young people. The school goes above and beyond to help pupils to see a positive future for themselves. Alongside this, pupils benefit from an extraordinary range of experiences that prepare them very well for life after school.

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

The school recognises that most pupils have had a turbulent education before joining this school. Staff use their in-depth knowledge of each pupil to design a curriculum that precisely matches their needs. This close match enables pupils to learn with success and build trust in the staff team. As a result, pupils achieve impressive outcomes. The school provides intensive therapeutic support. This helps pupils to navigate the ambitious curriculum while promoting positive mental health. Over time pupils learn to reflect on their mistakes, accept feedback and develop a 'can do' attitude.

The curriculum is meticulously set out for pupils. Staff are experts in their field and know exactly what pupils need to know and remember. They expertly adapt learning based on what pupils already know. Pupils have many opportunities to revisit key learning. This helps them to deepen their understanding and remember their learning over time. Teachers skilfully support pupils to learn new knowledge while embedding previous learning. They explain new learning clearly and use questioning to check pupils' understanding. Pupils produce work of an exceptionally high quality.

The carefully crafted reading curriculum enables pupils to develop into confident and fluent readers. Pupils benefit from regular visits to the library as well as staff recommending inspiring books for pupils to read. Staff spot when pupils need extra help and quicky put this in place. Over time pupils learn to love reading. They recognise how it helps them to be successful across the range of subjects that they study.

Improving pupils' emotional resilience is at the heart of the school's work. The overall offer for pupils' personal development is extremely well-thought-out. The school has long-standing established links with the local community. Pupils take part in a wide range of work experience opportunities that help to shape their hopes for the future. In addition, pupils participate in a range of voluntary projects, such as helping local residents with home improvements and neighbourhood safety measures. Through these, pupils learn to be active community citizens as well as developing essential communication and teamwork skills.

The school is typically calm and orderly. Through the high expectations that staff have of their behaviour and conduct, pupils' behaviour improves notably the longer they attend the school. Warm and supportive relationships feature throughout the school. At first, many pupils find it hard to trust adults. Staff quickly gain pupils' respect and mutually respectful relationships help pupils to feel safe and secure. Pupils learn the skills that they need to resolve conflict and to deal with unpredictable situations. This is just one of the ways that pupils are very well prepared to live independently when they leave the school.

Staff share and live out the school's vision for excellence. They consider the school to be an inspirational place to work. Staff benefit from extensive professional development opportunities. These are carefully planned to enhance their subject knowledge and teaching approaches. Staff feel privileged to work at a school that goes to such great lengths to give every child the life chances and choices that they deserve.

The proprietor has accurate knowledge of every aspect of the school. It provides substantial support and challenge that contributes to the high-quality outcomes for pupils in all aspects of their development. It ensures that the school complies with the independent school standards and other statutory requirements consistently, including schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	134781
DfE registration number	943/6054
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10342048
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Whinfell School Limited
Chair	Farouk Sheik
Headteacher	Patricia Sandham
Annual fees (day pupils)	£104,174
Telephone number	01539 723322
Website	www.cambiangroup.com
Email address	whinfell.admin@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	2 to 4 November 2021

Information about this school

- The last standard inspection took place on 2 to 4 November 2021. Since this inspection, there has been a material change inspection. This took place on 5 February 2024. The Department for Education approved the proprietor's request to increase the age range and the number of pupils on roll.
- The school operates from premises at 110 Windermere Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5EZ.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The inspectors only inspected the education provision at this school.
- The school is registered to admit up to 18 pupils. There are currently 11 pupils on roll.
- Pupils' places at the school are commissioned by local authorities from across the country.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), predominantly autism spectrum disorder. All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan.
- There is boarding provision at the school for 11 pupils.
- The school is part of the Cambian Group. The proprietor is Cambian Whinfell School Limited.

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 evaluation of the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, SEND co-ordinator and representatives of the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic education and art and design. 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 considered the responses to the staff survey. They met with staff to find out about their experiences of working at the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also spoke to some parents by telephone to gather their views of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school life. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.
- An inspector made a tour of the premises with the headteacher.
- 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.

Inspection team

Jane Dennis, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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