

Inspection of Cambian Dilston College

Inspection dates:

18 to 20 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Information about this provider

Cambian Dilston College is an independent specialist college in Northumberland that provides day and residential placements of up to 52 weeks a year for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including autism spectrum disorder and other high needs. The college is part of the Cambian Group, which specialises in the education of children and young people with SEND nationally. Many students at the college have complex and challenging needs and behaviours. Students attend lessons in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, animal care, art, music, catering, bakery and horticulture. At the time of the inspection, there were eight young people attending the college who were in scope for the inspection. Students are aged between 16 and 25 years.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Students are happy at the college and enjoy going to their lessons. They benefit from an environment that is conducive to learning. Students have access to quiet spaces such as the library and the computer room, and they use the sensory room to regulate their emotions.

Students benefit from working with staff who are well trained in helping them to manage and regulate their behaviour. Staff create a positive environment through the early identification of potential triggers and the use of effective intervention strategies. Staff know their students well and talk calmly and reassuringly to them.

Too many tutors do not plan lesson activities well enough to enable students to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours identified in their individual learning plans. In sessions where this is the case, tutors cannot clearly explain how the activities link to students' learning outcomes. As a result, too many students do not make the progress of which they are capable. Where teaching is more effective, tutors can clearly articulate why students are completing a specific task and which learning outcome it relates to.

Students feel safe at the college. Staff work closely with students to keep them safe. They communicate effectively with non-verbal students to understand how they are feeling and whether they are worried by anything at college, at home or in the community. Students who can communicate verbally say that they would speak to staff if they felt unsafe.

Students benefit from a range of activities to develop their understanding of citizenship. They participate in charity events such as Children in Need and Red Nose Day. Students celebrate Diwali and Chinese New Year, and staff teach them about topics such as the Gunpowder Plot and Remembrance Day.

Students attend well. Staff carefully monitor attendance and follow up to find out the reasons for any missed sessions. Staff support students to catch up on any work they have missed, and when students are not able to leave their residential settings, staff provide them with a range of learning materials.

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

Leaders, managers and governors have an appropriate strategic vision: to provide an effective curriculum to support students with high needs. They have a clear overview of their provision and have worked hard to improve many aspects of the teaching and learning experience that they provide for students. Senior leaders in the Cambian Group have recently appointed a new principal and vice principal to the college, who have a good understanding of the areas for improvement. Leaders and managers have implemented a useful development plan to address the areas for improvement. For example, they have completed informal visits to lessons and peer

reviews. Leaders and managers have scheduled formal observations of teaching, which will begin in the very near future. However, these actions have not yet had a significant enough impact on ensuring a consistently good quality of education.

Leaders and managers have developed an appropriate curriculum to support students to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to progress to adulthood. Students have a personalised curriculum, which includes attending work-related learning in the cafe and bakery, participating in independent living skills sessions, such as cookery, and accessing activities in the community. Leaders and managers have a clear strategy for improving the site to enhance the curriculum and student experience. The polytunnels in the horticulture area are about to be refurbished, and plans are in place for a new computer and sensory room.

Leaders and managers have implemented a useful training programme intended to support tutors to improve their teaching and assessment skills. For example, tutors have attended training in autism awareness, using positive behaviour strategies, Makaton and implementing a curriculum linked to student outcomes. Leaders and managers rightly recognise the need to continue to deliver training to staff to ensure a consistently effective approach by all tutors.

Leaders and managers have an accurate oversight of the progress of students. They meet frequently to discuss each student and the progress that students have made against their targets. They have recognised that too many students are capable of making more rapid progress.

Tutors use information gathered from education and health care plans and initial and diagnostic assessment to set accurate targets for students. However, too many tutors do not use assessment activities well enough in lessons to check students' understanding. They move on too quickly before students have fully understood what they have been taught. As a result, students do not make the progress of which they are capable. Too many tutors do not provide clear feedback to students to help them improve further.

Most tutors use a range of effective strategies to help students understand more easily. For example, they convey simple information by providing step-by-step instructions for students to carry out tasks such as changing bedding and taking laundry to the washing machine, and they provide a pictorial menu for students working in the college cafe.

Residential students benefit from a 24-hour curriculum. Tutors work closely with care staff where students live so that students can continue to develop their independent living skills in their home setting. For example, tutors provide sequenced task sheets for students, enabling them to perform tasks such as making a cup of tea and loading the washing machine.

Students benefit from effective support. They are supported by a high ratio of teaching assistants, as appropriate to their needs, and work with the speech and language therapist to develop their communication skills. Leaders and managers

allocate a range of support staff to work with students to prevent over-reliance on one person. However, a few students do not respond well to a change in support staff, which impacts on their engagement in sessions.

Tutors plan a careers programme that is appropriate to the needs of individual students. They work closely with an external careers provider to provide impartial advice and to develop an individual careers programme, enabling students to work towards the targets in their individual learning plans. Students attend work experience in the internal cafe and bakery and in cafes in the community, and they access volunteering activities at the Cycle Hub and engage in enterprise activities such as baking goods to sell at Hexham market. These activities help students to develop their social interaction and communication skills, leading to improvement in their confidence and resilience.

Staff do not plan well enough for all students to learn about important topics such as sexual and healthy relationships and consent. A few staff think that students with complex needs do not need to learn about these topics. Managers have produced a scheme of work with a comprehensive curriculum for personal development topics, but it is too early to see the full impact of this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding leads and their deputies have appropriate training in place to be effective in their roles. They implement rigorous safeguarding policies and procedures to keep students safe, including a safe recruitment process to ensure that staff are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults.

Staff have a very sound focus on keeping students safe and promoting safe behaviours in their interactions with others. They use social stories and modelling of appropriate social communication when they go out into the community with students. They ensure that students know about road safety and which toilet to use.

Staff observe students carefully so that they are cognisant of changes in behaviour, which may indicate a welfare or safeguarding issue. They are supported well by the speech and language therapist to use intensive interaction and social stories to promote appropriate touching and to enable students to establish and communicate their identity.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the consistency of the quality of education to ensure that all students receive consistently good teaching.

- Ensure that all tutors use assessment activities effectively to check students' understanding before moving on to new learning activities.
- Ensure that all tutors provide clear feedback to students to help them improve further.
- Ensure that all tutors plan lesson activities to enable students to work towards their learning outcomes.
- Ensure that all students learn about sexual and healthy relationships and consent and that all staff recognise the importance of this.
- Ensure that leaders and managers implement the carefully planned and comprehensive personal development curriculum.

Provider details

Unique reference number	131868
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Contact number	01434 632692
Website	https://www.cambiangroup.com/specialist-education/our-colleges/cambian-dilston-college/
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Marie Flatman
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	14 to 16 September 2021
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Jacque Brown, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Hayley Lomas	His Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Angus	His Majesty's Inspector

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