

The Forum School

Shillingstone, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 0QS

Inspection date

17 April 2024

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 9, 14, 16

- At the emergency inspection in July 2023, the proprietor failed to ensure that safeguarding practices in the school met statutory requirements. The proprietor wrote a comprehensive action plan to address these failings. It is being implemented effectively. The proprietor has brought in a temporary executive leader to lead improvements on their behalf. There is better oversight of the implementation of safeguarding procedures. Lines of accountability in the school are increasing markedly.
- The executive leader reports directly to the proprietor board representatives and is being held to account for implementing necessary improvements. As a result, many new systems and processes are taking hold well. This is bringing about an open culture of safeguarding. For example, a recent review of operational school practices is improving how leaders communicate their expectations. Staff receive regular briefings and training. Staff are held to account for ensuring that safeguarding practices are carried out in line with school policies.
- Induction training is ensuring that new staff understand and implement the heightened expectations now in place. Leaders are ensuring that school policies and pupils' individual behaviour plans and risk assessments are adhered to.
- A set of safeguarding policies is on the school's website that meets legislative requirements. Policies relating to addressing low-level staff concerns, staff recruitment procedures and day-to-day safety on the school site are implemented suitably. There is now appropriate oversight of the school's procedures to identify, help manage and protect pupils from harm.
- Senior staff have received 'managing allegations' training. They apply it to complete any investigation. The school is working closely with the local authority safeguarding team. Dorset local authority is making regular visits to the school. There is an open and transparent relationship with the local authority designated officer.

- The single central record is now compliant. Executive leaders and senior leaders check the single central record regularly. They take any required action swiftly. Two leaders have sufficient designated safeguarding leadership (DSL) training. Other leaders' refresher DSL training was booked before this inspection and is scheduled to be refreshed soon.
- In recent months, there has been a change to the organisation of learning time. Pupils are now taught in class groups. Each class and individual has a timetable. This enables leaders to have an increased oversight of pupils' experience at school. What the school calls 'high priority group meetings' involve teachers, teaching assistants, therapy leaders and senior leaders. During these meetings staff work systematically to review and update individual pupil's risk assessments and behaviour and education plans. This system is relatively new and is yet to embed.
- Supervision ratios are suitable in class and at social times. Very recently, there has been an increase in staff appointed into education roles. There is a comprehensive package of induction training for new staff.
- There is a behaviour policy in place which is being followed. Safeguarding briefings and additional training has brought about improvements to the school's record-keeping for safeguarding and behaviour issues. The school policy is being applied effectively. There is a risk assessment policy in place. Regular checks on the school site take place. Risk assessments are detailed and updated regularly.
- Leaders recognise that some changes to meet legislative requirements are recent. The proprietor is aware that it these improvements now need to be sustained over time.
- The standards in this part are met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 18-20, 21

- The school's action plan is being implemented effectively. New systems and processes ensure that all the required checks on staff, including supply staff, are in place.
- The single central record meets legislative requirements.
- Prohibition checks on staff are completed in line with requirements.
- The standards in this part are now met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- At the emergency inspection in July 2023, some parts of the site were in disrepair. The proprietor has removed the tennis court that was unsafe. This has now been seeded over to grass and is a safe communal area. Rubbish and clutter across the site have been removed. The school buildings are in good order and generally well maintained.
- A recent lightning strike disabled the sensor on the school gate and a fire safety panel in one building on 28 March 2024. At the time of the inspection, these failings had been reported to the proprietor board and appropriate mitigations put into place to ensure that pupils are not at significant risk of harm. However, at the time of the inspection, works had not started to replace the fire panel or mend the gate. Works on the gate were completed on 26 April 2024. Work on the fire panel was nearing completion on 30

April 2024. The proprietor recognises that better oversight is needed to ensure that all approved works are completed in good time.

- This paragraph in this part is not met.
- The standards in this part are not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(c)

- Since the emergency inspection in July 2023, the proprietor has ensured that leaders have completed much positive work to bring safeguarding requirements in the school in line with legislation. The proprietor has improved oversight of the working practices in the school and retrained staff to ensure pupils' welfare is actively promoted. Some of these changes are very recent.
- This paragraph in this part is met.

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(b)

- The temporary leadership arrangements, along with the number of very recent changes that have needed to be made to meet parts 3 to 5, between January 2024 and April 2024, mean that the internal capacity to continually meet the independent school standards is not yet proven to be secure.
- The proprietor has not yet ensured that temporary and substantive leaders in the school have a secure understanding and knowledge of the requirements of the independent school standards so that they are met securely and consistently.
- These paragraphs in this part are not met.
- The standards in this part are not met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

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

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	116593
DfE registration number	838/6033
Inspection number	10320910

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Autism Services Ltd
Chair	Farouq Sheikh
Headteacher	Mr Daniel Pitt
Annual fees (day pupils)	£95,172
Telephone number	01258 860295
Website	https://www.cambiagroup.com/specialist-education/our-schools/autism-schools/the-forum-school/
Email address	forum.admin@cambiagroup.com
Date of previous standard inspection	9 to 11 November 2022

Information about this school

- The Forum school is part of the Cambian Group, a national provider of independent specialist education.

- The school caters for pupils with autism. All pupils have education, health and care plans. A significant number of the pupils at the school are nonverbal, or semi-verbal due to their complex needs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection and in response to a complaint about pupils' welfare, health and safety, including their supervision at the school.
- The inspection took place with no notice.
- The school received an emergency inspection in July 2023. The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned this inspection in response to a serious complaint relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils and leadership and management. The school's previous inspection took place in November 2022. The school was judged to require improvement. This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the emergency inspection in July 2023.
- On 28 September 2023, the DfE gave notice that the school was requiring an action plan under section 114(5) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The proprietor submitted the action plan to the Secretary of State for approval, to specify the steps that it will take to meet each of the independent school standards that it did not comply with at the emergency inspection in July 2023. The DfE accepted the action plan.
- The inspector checked the school's compliance with some independent school standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils, the suitability of staff, the premises and accommodation and leadership and management.
- The inspector met with the headteacher deputy headteacher, the temporary executive lead and the proprietor's representative. She also talked to school staff and visited lessons.
- The inspector spoke to pupils in lessons. However, she was not able to speak with pupils unaccompanied by staff.
- A range of documentation was considered, including policies, the school's action plan, risk assessments, records of safeguarding, behaviour incidents and minutes of regular operational meetings. The inspector took into account records held by Dorset local authority.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

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;

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
 - 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether–
 - 21(3)(a)(i) S's identity was checked
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction

- 21(3)(a)(iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications
- 21(3)(a)(v) an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S
- 21(3)(a)(vi) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(d)
- 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and
- 21(3)(a)(viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e)
- 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.

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)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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