



The Phoenix School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134272
LEA PETERBOROUGH CITY OF PETERBOROUGH LEA
Inspection number 282522
Inspection dates 4 July 2006 to 5 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Charlie Henry HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special	School address	Clayton Site
School category	Community		PE2 5SD
Age range of pupils	3 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01733 391666
Number on roll	81	Fax number	01733 391477
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Margaret Short
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Phil Pike

Age group 3 to 18	Inspection dates 4 July 2006 - 5 July 2006	Inspection number 282522
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Phoenix is a school for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some have additional physical and communication difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders; a few also have visual and hearing difficulties. Almost all pupils have statements of special educational needs; the others are undergoing statutory assessment. A third are aged over 16, including a small group who spend part of their time at the school and the remainder at the local college of further education. There are more boys than girls. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. About 20% are from minority ethnic backgrounds, principally Pakistani, where English is not the main language spoken at home. Pupils come from across the borough of Peterborough and from other nearby authorities. There are a significant number of pupils who are looked after by the local authority. The Phoenix is a new school having opened in September 2004, following the amalgamation of two special schools. It became an extended school in April 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Phoenix is a good and rapidly improving special school. Since opening just two years ago it has made very great strides to provide an outstanding ethos of care and support for its pupils. This special achievement is due to the excellent leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteachers, together with the dedication and commitment of all staff. The school is very evidently better than its overly modest self-evaluation of satisfactory. Pupils of all ages make good progress, including those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, have English as an additional language or are looked after by the local authority. They make particularly good progress in developing their communication and in learning skills that will help them when they leave school. Progress in personal development and well-being is outstanding. Pupils really enjoy school; they behave very well and are very enthusiastic. Teaching and learning are good overall; some lessons are outstanding. Staff teamwork is strong and they use their knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs effectively. The assessment of pupils' learning is satisfactory and the school is aware that it needs to continue to improve the quality of target setting and the recording of progress made. The curriculum is good, especially for the extended range of activities at lunchtime and after school. There are outstanding links with other schools, the local college and businesses to extend learning opportunities. The quality of care, support and guidance is outstanding. Parents have very good reasons to be extremely pleased with the way their children are cared for. There are appropriate procedures and training for ensuring child protection. Leadership and management are good overall. Excellent leadership has set a very clear direction for improvement and the promotion of high quality of care and education. Self-evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement has been effective in driving the school forwards rapidly. The school has rightly identified the need to develop further quality assurance systems, especially the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress and to use this information to set targets to raise their achievements even higher. This is satisfactory at the present. Governors are very supportive and have contributed well to the development of the new school. They rightly recognise that they now need more detailed information about how well pupils are doing. The Phoenix School has undergone very substantial development since it opened and there has been effective use of its resources. Accommodation is excellent as a result of the commitment of the local authority to listen carefully to staff and create just what pupils need. The school demonstrates very good capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The post-16 provision is good and, as with the rest of the school, is continuing to improve rapidly. Students make good progress across all areas of their development, especially in learning skills that will help them when they leave school, such as meeting new challenges and in expressing their likes and dislikes. Students on work-placements, such as helping in the school dining room or the school office, learn about work place

skills. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and sometimes it is outstanding. The curriculum is also good and shows a progression from what younger pupils are learning as they approach adulthood and greater independence. The school has made a very good start to developing two important transition documents, with the Phoenix Diploma, which records achievements, and the person-centred plan, that helps direct what pupils will do after leaving school. Leadership and management are good and there is a clear view about how to improve the provision further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of the framework for assessment and recording achievement, including initial baseline assessments and target setting. - More rigorously use information about pupils' progress to set targets within school improvement planning to raise achievements even higher. - Provide a wider range of information to governors about pupils' progress and achievements so that they can further develop their role.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

As a result of their learning needs, all pupils enter the school with standards that are well below what is expected for other youngsters of their age. Overall, pupils make good progress across all areas of the curriculum given their abilities and starting points during the time they are at school. The school estimated the progress made by pupils as satisfactory because they realised that they needed to do further work on accurately evaluating the progress made in all subjects. Inspectors found that all groups of pupils achieved equally well, given their individual needs, including those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, have English as an additional language or are looked after by the local authority. Pupils of all ages make particularly good progress with their communication skills. They are very pleased with the things they have learned, especially in the way they are more able to give their views and make choices. Pupils make good progress towards the targets set within their individual education plans (IEPs). The school has identified that it needs to continue to improve the quality of this target setting so that it demonstrates more fully the progress that pupils make. The older students make good gains in the skills that they develop in preparation for when they leave school. The school has successfully met the whole school targets set for the core subjects of the curriculum and is working hard to raise standards even higher by making sure future targets are better informed by whole school evaluation. Parents are very pleased with the progress that their children make. Several explained how their children were doing things now that they never thought possible and that this gave them far more optimism for the future.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is outstanding. It is very evident through the enthusiasm pupils show when they arrive each morning and during lessons and activities that they enjoy

school. This is the result of the school's success in the short time that it has been open in creating a welcoming and friendly atmosphere for pupils where they are valued as individuals and treated with dignity and respect. Behaviour and attitudes are consistently very good and attendance is good. Pupils have very good relationships with staff and with one another; more able pupils can often be seen helping others. In this exceptionally supportive community, pupils know there is always someone they can talk to if they are worried or anxious. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is excellent. Pupils learn about and help to make the school and classroom rules. They make their views known through the school council. Pupils take great pride in their achievements and work hard to gain commendation certificates. Pupils take advantage of the many opportunities presented to grow in self-confidence and to become more mature and independent, They learn to keep themselves safe, for instance, older students learn how to travel safely on public transport. They show involvement in the community, for example, by helping to run a coffee morning to raise funds and awareness of water conservation. Pupils know the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. They make healthy choices from the lunch menu, eat healthy snacks and take part enthusiastically in the many physical activities provided.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good; some lessons are outstanding. The school cautiously evaluated the quality as satisfactory because it was aware that it needed to do more in evaluating how well teaching helps pupils make progress. In the best lessons staff use their knowledge of pupils very effectively to plan relevant activities that capture their interest and motivate them to do well. Teachers plan for the often wide range of abilities within the group and, through very effective teamwork with assistants, ensure pupils move from one activity to the next without losing attention. Although there is some variability in the quality of the individual pupils' targets within IEPs and subject plans these are usually used well to focus on the most important aspects of learning. Satisfactory use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning and the school recognises the need for continued developments, training and resources in this area. In a few lessons the planning for use of assistants is not sufficiently detailed and, as a result, there are periods when individual pupils are not as busy as they could be. Assessment is satisfactory. There is a good framework for tracking how well pupils are learning and the school has correctly identified that it needs to continue its efforts to make its use even more consistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The curriculum for younger pupils to age 14 covers all minimum National Curriculum requirements. The school has worked hard to develop their

approach to planning to be more pupil-centred, rather than based on discrete subjects. There is a good emphasis on aspects such as creativity and drama. These help to enliven pupils' learning experiences across all subjects. In the lower school, booster groups give good support to higher attaining pupils' learning in literacy, numeracy, science and personal and social skills. The curriculum for students in Years 10 to 13 is strong because it includes well planned work-related learning and college link courses. There are also many recreational, sporting and life skills opportunities. These give good support to students' learning. They improve their social and life skills, promote their economic awareness and successfully prepare them for adult life. The curriculum promotes well pupils' enjoyment in learning and their awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise. It successfully makes pupils aware of the need to keep themselves safe and enables them to make a successful contribution to their own and the wider community. Pupils take part in many educational visits and residential trips. There are growing links with other schools, colleges and local businesses, and partnerships with local community organisations. These provide valuable extra support to learning, especially enhancing pupils' self-confidence and independence. Pupils whose first language is not English are given very good support through the help of a skilled teaching assistant. The establishment of the Phoenix as an extended school has helped further develop the very good range of lunchtime clubs and after school extended activities. These help to further broaden pupils' learning experiences and prove a great deal of fun and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, support and guidance are outstanding. Staff provide very good pastoral welfare and support which creates a calm and reassuring place to learn. They are dedicated and work as a team to provide for pupils' personal and medical needs in conjunction with the school nurse. Staff liaise well with a steadily increasing number and range of therapists, other professional partners and agencies. Care and behaviour plans are used very well. Parents and carers are fully involved in reviews of their children's progress and think very highly of the levels of care offered. They are pleased with the support and information when their children start at the school, about how well they are doing and at the transition to further education. A school parent liaison assistant contributes very effectively to the excellent support for parents. Holiday play schemes and parental groups provide very good additional support opportunities. The school has appropriate measures for safeguarding pupils and there are rigorous risk assessments for pupil activities, journeys out of school and residential visits. The leadership group provide regular training to staff in child protection procedures. Very good support is provided for children looked after by the local authority and for those whose first language is not English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good overall. This judgement supports the school's self-evaluation. The excellent leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteachers has set a very clear direction leading to improvement and the promotion of high quality of care and education. The resulting ethos of respect and commitment to pupils' wellbeing is outstanding. This is shared by all staff. This is a special achievement given the school has only been open for two years. The school runs very smoothly day to day. Self-evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement has been effective and, through development planning, is driving the school forwards rapidly. The school leadership team has rightly identified the need to develop further their quality assurance systems, especially the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress, and to use this information to set targets to raise their achievements even higher. This aspect is satisfactory at the present. Equality of opportunity is promoted well through the detailed knowledge that staff have about pupils and the review and planning procedures. Accommodation is excellent as a result of the commitment of the local authority to listen carefully to staff and create just what pupils need. The governing body is effective. It has contributed well to the development of the new school and is very supportive. Governors recognise that to further improve its monitoring they need more detailed information about how well pupils are doing. The school has undergone very substantial development since it opened and there has been effective use of its resources. It demonstrates very good capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know we recently visited your school to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for looking after us and making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed it and learned a lot about your school. Thank you for telling us about the things you do and what you like about school. We really liked your school. It is a special place. What we liked about your school: - the way you all work so hard, enjoy school and want to learn - the progress you make, especially towards your targets - the care you get from all staff - the things that you learn - the way your teachers, assistants and other adults help you - the way your school is run. We have asked your teachers to look carefully at how well you are doing and use this information to help you even more.