

# The Phoenix Collegiate

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	136091
<b>Local authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	382026
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation Trust School
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1829
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	305
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Leigh Pepper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Brian Heavisides
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Clarks Lane West Bromwich B71 2BX
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 5888384
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 5675284
<b>Email address</b>	info@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	11–19
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	25–26 January 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	382026



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Kevin Sheldrick	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sean Thornton	Additional inspector
Mick Saunders	Additional inspector
Alan Brewerton	Additional inspector
Heather Housden	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed 44 lessons taught by 44 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, representatives of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at communications with parents and carers, assessment information and the school's development planning. The questionnaires from students, staff and 112 parents and carers were scrutinised.

## Information about the school

The Phoenix Collegiate is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It came into existence in September 2010 following the merger of two local schools. A headteacher, new to the area, leads the school. The school is based in the buildings that previously housed the Menzies and Manor High Schools. The school is experiencing a decrease in student numbers and, as a consequence, the level of staffing is being reduced. This reorganisation means the school is continuing to manage changes in many areas.

The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage who are disabled or who have special educational needs is also above average. The majority of students are of White British heritage. A small minority are of Indian heritage while the remainder are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and includes some who speak English as an additional language. The school's results meet the current floor standard (the government's nationally expected minimum).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

### Key findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement and teaching.

- Students' achievement is currently inadequate but there is evidence of impressive improvements in teaching that are accelerating progress sharply. There was a substantial rise in the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics at grades A\* to C in 2011 and current assessment information indicates much improved rates of progress. Furthermore, determined action by the school is reducing the large gaps in the performance of different groups of students. These improvements stem from the leadership team's decision to adopt much more challenging targets.
- However, teaching is inadequate because over time students have not made enough progress and weaknesses remain both in the quality of teaching and in students' learning. There is insufficient emphasis on the development of students' communication skills with the result that they are often too passive in lessons.
- Although parents and carers raised some concerns about behaviour, students were appreciative of the improvements that are evident both in lessons and around the school. Major disruptions to learning are uncommon. Relatively few parents and carers returned a questionnaire. A minority of these were quite critical of the school although many also acknowledged recent improvements.
- The sixth form is improving and its overall effectiveness is satisfactory.
- At the same time as having to deal with the many issues associated with the merging of two schools and continuing reductions in staffing, leaders have transformed the expectations of most staff and students. The evidence of improvement is substantial and includes: a sharp reduction in exclusions, improved attendance, the effective tackling of major weaknesses in teaching

and the impressive closing of the gaps in the performance between different groups. This picture left inspectors in no doubt that the school has the capacity to improve despite the existence of some important weaknesses.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the progress students make and enhance their communication skills by:
  - eradicating inadequate teaching at the earliest opportunity
  - ensuring students are consistently provided with activities in lessons that relate to their challenging targets
  - increasing the opportunities students have to consider appropriate questions and explain their thinking to others
  - enhancing the opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning, including the presentation of their work to a range of audiences
  - increasing students' involvement in assessing their own work and that of others using a range of assessment criteria
  - fine tuning the monitoring of teaching so that it more fully addresses the quality of students' learning.
  
- Improve the engagement with parents and carers so that they can more effectively support their children's learning.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

When the school opened in September 2010, students' attainment was very low. When the merged schools were considered together the outcomes were below the government's floor standard but, in a very short time, the new school enhanced the achievement of many students. In 2011 many more students attained qualifications than was the case at the predecessor schools. Although these results were a sharp improvement, there were still major shortcomings in students' progress since leaving their primary schools and, overall, progress in the main school was inadequate.

Students' progress is not yet consistently satisfactory. Nevertheless, throughout the school there is evidence of accelerated progress, largely as a result of the higher expectations that are becoming established. Students in the sixth form are making satisfactory progress and achievement in the current Year 11 is much closer to satisfactory. The gaps in achievement for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are disabled or have special educational needs, which were especially large, are quickly being reduced. Enhanced mentoring and curriculum changes have improved the performance of boys of White British heritage. The more accurate identification of special educational needs is resulting in more bespoke support for these students.

## Quality of teaching

Despite recent improvements that are recognised by most students and some parents and carers, teaching is inadequate. Teaching is not yet securing satisfactory progress for all students and too many students lack the confidence to speak and share their views. Teaching in the sixth form is better adapted to the needs of the students, who have more opportunities to work independently, including being able to present their ideas.

Teachers' expectations of students have been raised by changes made to the curriculum. A sizeable minority of lessons observed were good. Teachers were able to target questions at particular individuals or groups and follow up students' responses with more probing questions. In a good mathematics lesson on very large numbers, students used whiteboards to show the teacher their individual responses to the questions. The teacher skilfully developed the lesson in the light of this feedback. In a highly effective English lesson on punctuation, the teacher promoted students' communication skills by insisting that they carefully explained their thinking. Praise was used to coax more in-depth responses from students. In the more effective lessons, students are encouraged to discuss their ideas in groups but in a minority of lessons concerns about behaviour prevent some teachers from providing opportunities of this kind.

In too many lessons the teachers talk too much and students do not have sufficient opportunities to think for themselves or to communicate their ideas. Too often, students are only expected to give one-word answers. They do not have sufficient opportunities to learn independently or to present their work in a range of different ways, such as through the use of information and communication technology. Expectations of work rate are not consistently high and, as a result, students often work at their own pace which can be too slow.

The quality and impact of marking are inconsistent and improvements are recent. The best marking recognises strengths in students' work and identifies what needs to be improved. However, checks are not always made on the extent to which students respond to such comments.

The school recognises that provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is inconsistent, particularly in large classes where there is less additional adult support. As a result it is promoting the concept that 'everyone is a special educational needs teacher'. Effective strategies are used to promote reading, including among those students with more profound reading difficulties. Teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development satisfactorily. Students are enjoying the better lessons they experience.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Around the school, students were observed to be well behaved, polite and considerate. Although the large majority of students behave well in lessons, some lack positive attitudes to learning. Weaknesses in teaching over time have contributed to some students lack of enthusiasm for learning and at times they are very reluctant to respond to teachers' questioning. Students indicate that disruption

in lessons is rare. Most students respond well to the school's clear expectations regarding behaviour. Behaviour is managed well by the majority of teachers.

There have been some adaptations to the curriculum designed to enhance students' behaviour. For instance, students are able to make choices so they follow more appropriate courses from the end of Year 8. Exclusions are reducing because behaviour is improving. The school carefully monitors the behaviour of those students most at risk of exclusion and develops bespoke programmes of support to improve their behaviour.

The school has taken determined and effective action to reduce incidents of bullying. It has enhanced the role of the school council and introduced a range of channels so students can report any concerns. Only rarely is bullying not dealt with to the satisfaction of students, parents and carers. The school is fastidious in its recording of prejudice-based bullying and takes appropriate action in response to this. Punctuality to lessons is excellent and attendance overall is improving steadily, although it remains below average.

The large majority of students, parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires indicated that students feel safe in school and think that behaviour is improving. The curriculum provides students with many opportunities to consider safety. In science and design and technology lessons, students were observed to be taking appropriate actions to ensure their own safety and that of others around them.

## **Leadership and management**

Since the school opened, its leaders have managed effectively the major challenges associated with merging two schools, decreasing student numbers and a reduction in staffing. Leaders have been largely successful in bringing together two different schools and introducing more effective approaches to teaching and the management of behaviour across the two sites. The existence of weaknesses in teaching explains the significant variation in outcomes between subjects in the 2011 results. Since then, further improvements have been rapidly reducing this variation. The impressive improvements made so quickly, during a period of considerable reorganisation, is strong evidence that the school has the capacity to improve.

Senior leaders are very clear about the priorities to be addressed and have quickly gained credibility by leading the school to gain results that were much higher than both predecessor schools. They have successfully raised the expectations of most staff and students. The school recognises that current outcomes are not good enough, particularly for those students whose circumstances would suggest they are likely to be most vulnerable. The effective steps being taken to close the gaps in the performance of different groups are the result of a firm commitment to ensure equal opportunities. The approach to improving the outcomes for White British boys highlights the school's willingness to be innovative. These boys have taken a lead in helping identify the changes to the lessons and the curriculum needed to ensure they can achieve more. Changes to the curriculum have already improved the outcomes in science and mathematics. Greater choice from the end of Year 8 has enhanced students' motivation and enjoyment. The school is using the diversity among its

population to promote cultural awareness further. It has also taken advantage of the merger to further promote students' social development through carefully considered activities designed to build a shared ethos across both sites.

Parents and carers appreciated the headteacher's willingness to lead from the front in terms of reviewing and developing the provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs. Although the school has had some success involving the parents and carers of potentially vulnerable students, generally the large majority are not sufficiently involved with the school in considering how they might support their children's learning. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet government requirements. It has listened well to students' feedback about safety and has taken steps to ensure they feel safe throughout both campuses.

The governing body is highly focused and has a clear understanding of and commitment to the identified priorities. Leaders have concentrated very well on improving those aspects of teaching that will make the greatest difference. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been very effective but the school recognises that the next step is to focus its monitoring more on checking the impact of teaching on the quality of learning, for instance, the extent to which communication skills and a high pace of learning are secured. Underperformance has been challenged and there are signs that the school is successfully beginning to share good practice between teachers.

There is some variability in the effectiveness of middle leaders but all of the key subjects are being well led. The current senior leadership team is large but this is giving the members of this team the insight they need to be effective in their roles. Leaders of the sixth form have also raised expectations through the successful adoption of more challenging targets and enhanced facilities for students in this phase.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 January 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of The Phoenix Collegiate, West Bromwich, B71 2BX**

I would like to thank you for welcoming us to your school when we visited recently. Special thanks go to those of you who we interviewed, for your important comments that helped inform our judgements.

We decided that the overall effectiveness of your school is inadequate and that it should be given a notice to improve because of weaknesses in achievement and teaching. Despite this judgement, we agreed with you that your school is improving in many areas. For instance, the results in 2011 were the best ever. We found strong evidence that the school's leaders have the ability to ensure the school makes further improvements.

During the inspection, we found that your behaviour around the school was very good. However, there are occasional shortcomings in behaviour in lessons. We agreed with you that incidents of bullying have reduced and behaviour has improved since your school opened. We were pleased that you all know your challenging targets and that you are now expected to work at a higher level in lessons. We found that you experience some teaching that is good. More of you are enjoying lessons and teachers are giving you more feedback so that you know what to do to improve further. In the very best lessons, you have good opportunities to share your ideas with others in the class. Despite these strengths, teaching was judged to be inadequate because over time it has not enabled you to make enough progress and it does not promote your communication skills sufficiently.

To improve further, we have asked the school to encourage you to explain your thinking more and give you more opportunities to present your ideas. We have asked the school to make sure there is no inadequate teaching and to encourage you to work harder in lessons.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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