

Phoenix Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	133961
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	381574
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2012
Lead inspector	Helen Howard

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Pepper
Headteacher	Robert Juniper
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 July 2009
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	10–11 July 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Helen Howard

Additional inspector

Anthony Munday

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by seven teachers. They met with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and members of staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including data about pupils' progress, and self-evaluation and monitoring records. They also analysed questionnaires received from 43 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Phoenix Community Primary is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is higher than average. The majority of these have moderate learning difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties. More than a quarter of pupils join or leave the school part-way through their education. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

The school runs a breakfast club for its pupils which formed part of the inspection. A children's centre, which shares the site, is inspected separately.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because while teaching is mainly good or better, pupils do not make rapid and sustained progress. Higher ability pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to work independently in lessons and boys' attainment in writing remains below that of girls.
- Pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress overall and, in an increasing proportion of lessons, their progress is outstanding. From starting points that are below and sometimes well below age-related expectations on entry to Reception, pupils make good progress throughout the school and attain close to national expectations by the end of Year 6.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, use time very well and provide a wide range of motivating activities. They use assessment information skilfully to plan work that matches pupils' individual needs and ability levels. However, a very small minority of pupils are not always given reading texts that help them to practise their newly acquired early reading skills.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are friendly and very respectful of others. Their excellent attitudes to learning and curiosity enable them to make the most of all opportunities offered to them in lessons. They feel very safe in school and actively support each other.
- The headteacher is supported well by senior leaders and by the governing body. Since the last inspection, attainment in mathematics has risen as a result of a whole-school focus. The quality of teaching has improved through effective performance management and through strong leadership of professional development. Attendance, which was low, has rapidly improved and is now average.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is outstanding by:
 - offering more opportunities for higher ability pupils to learn independently.
 - ensuring that lower ability pupils are always given texts that support their practice of early reading skills.
- Raise boys' attainment in writing by consistently offering more scope for them to link work to their interests.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start school with skills and abilities that are below age-related expectations in most areas. By the time they leave school, their attainment is broadly average in both English and mathematics. Attainment fluctuates yearly as a result of the high proportion of pupils who join or leave the school part-way through their education. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress overall relative to their starting points. While boys make good progress overall in writing, their attainment remains below that of girls. The school is addressing this by introducing work that is more closely related to boys' interests, but this is not yet consistently offered in lessons.

Children in Reception make good progress because there are effective links with the children's centre and adults take every opportunity to focus on learning. For example, when children were setting up a 'car washing facility' using toys, the teacher encouraged others to 'pay' for the service with coins so that they could reinforce what they were learning about money. Others were encouraged to write an advertisement for the car wash. Consequently, they made particularly good progress in writing and in development of mathematical skills.

Throughout the school, pupils continue to make good progress in all areas. The school has recently introduced a new approach to teaching phonics (linking sounds to letters) and consequently pupils' progress is accelerating in reading, particularly in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Pupils' attainment overall in reading at the end of Year 2 is close to national expectations and in the current Year 6 is above average.

Pupils' love of learning is evident in all lessons and they particularly enjoy practical and creative activities. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson for example, pupils explored number sequences to estimate how many hats could be designed with different coloured Olympic rings. Each group of pupils had equipment including coloured cubes, pens, hula hoops, cones and computer software. At the end of the lesson, the class could ascertain which had helped them the most and as a result, they made outstanding progress. Pupils' attainment in mathematics has rapidly improved

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recently as a result of this whole-school focus on practical activities.

Groups of pupils, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress because they have well-matched activities in lessons and they are effectively supported by teaching assistants. Pupils who join the school part-way through their education make good progress because the school supports transition very well. Almost all parents and carers feel that their children are making good progress.

Quality of teaching

In almost all lessons, teaching is good and an increasing proportion is outstanding. The use of time is a consistent strength across the school and not a moment is wasted. Teachers plan a variety of imaginative activities so that pupils of all abilities are motivated and can succeed. For example, a Year 4 classroom was transformed to an underwater sea world and pupils entered the room with goggles and masks, 'swimming' into the imaginary setting. Consequently, they explored how they felt and what they saw and were able to apply their thoughts to simple and complex sentences, using vocabulary such as 'silhouette' and 'distress call'. The high quality of classroom displays across the school contributes to how well pupils engage with learning. While higher ability pupils make good progress overall, they are not always given enough opportunities to learn independently and, in these lessons, their progress slows.

Teachers use assessment well to plan activities, to give pupils feedback on how well they are doing and to inform what they need to do to improve their work. They use marking well to set challenges or to edit work, and give time for pupils to respond. Teachers provide 'steps to success', which give pupils detailed criteria for their learning and pupils use these well to assess their work.

Teachers plan carefully for all groups of pupils and for individuals who are assessed as underperforming. They set specific activities to accelerate progress. Teaching assistants support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs well and consequently, they make good progress. These pupils are also supported well by their peers, who encourage and help them in paired work.

Teachers and teaching assistants provide effective phonics teaching across Reception and in Years 1 to 4. Pupils enjoy these sessions because the pace is good and they are constantly encouraged to do well. They make accelerated progress in these sessions, although for a very small minority of lower ability pupils, progress slows when the texts they are given do not give them the opportunity to use their new skills in context.

Teachers provide good opportunities for developing pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness, particularly through themed activities and in assemblies. They plan a wide variety of activities in projects that include teaching about different cultures and religions. For example the Asian Experience project in Years 5 and 6

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develops an awareness of the main faiths and cultures of China and India and includes an appreciation of dance and art.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their improving attendance, which is now average and rising rapidly. Pupils are extremely polite and take responsibility for their own and each other's outstanding behaviour. The vast majority of parents, carers and pupils say that behaviour is good in school. Older pupils are 'playground heroes', helping younger pupils to play. Pupils are consistently welcoming, considerate and proud to talk about their work. In lessons, they are absorbed in their learning, support each other very well and benefit from the excellent role models that adults provide. One child in Reception, for example, supported a child who was struggling to read a word by saying, 'Look at that picture. There's a bug on the hen. What do you think the word might be then?'

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and almost all parents and carers agree. Pupils speak highly of the visitors who teach them about safety, especially regarding railway safety. They are acutely aware of the different types of bullying, including cyber- and prejudice-based bullying, although they could not think of any incidents that had occurred in the school. Older pupils act as 'peer mediators', helping to resolve arguments when they occur.

Pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are supported very well by adults. Teachers skilfully manage behaviour in lessons so that there is no disruption to learning. Over time, records confirm that behaviour of individual pupils notably improves in response to good teaching and effective in-school and external support.

Leadership and management

The strong leadership of the headteacher is enhanced by good support from senior leaders and managers and by the effective governing body. Leaders and managers know the school well and take effective action to address weaknesses. Strong partnerships with the local authority, a hub of six primary schools and local secondary schools have resulted in improvements since the last inspection, including in achievement, the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance. This demonstrates strong capacity for further improvement.

Parents and carers are highly supportive and almost all of those who responded say the school helps them to support their child's learning. The school engages parents and carers well through a number of parent and carer workshops and with the home learning tasks that encourage them to work with their children.

Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been developed and provides creative and memorable experiences for pupils through a range of linked activities, trips and visits. A recent Year 5 and 6 trip to London gave pupils the opportunity to create a

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large-scale model railway that includes famous landmarks. The model was produced by the whole year group and very effectively linked mathematics, design and technology and artwork. The breakfast club provides play and activities for pupils and is effectively used to encourage them to attend booster sessions for mathematics and English.

The recently restructured governing body has renewed its focus on pupils' outcomes and teaching. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Governors hold senior leaders to account through external reports and in regular visits to the school. School leaders monitor the school's work well and have improved the quality of teaching through effective performance management and the provision of a variety of professional development activities, including peer-coaching, joint observations and visits to and from other primary schools.

The school is highly inclusive and ensures that all pupils have equal access to activities. There are no reported incidents of discrimination and all groups of pupils make good progress overall.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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).

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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



12 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Phoenix Community Primary School, Kent TN24 9LS

You may remember that two of us came to visit your school recently. Thank you for such a wonderful welcome.

Phoenix Primary is a good school that is continuing to improve. We saw how much you enjoy lessons and how well you make progress. You said that you particularly enjoy lessons when there is something practical to do and we agree. We enjoyed your model railway and could see how much work you had put into it.

You think that teaching is good and we agree. We loved the way that your teachers have made your classrooms such exciting places to be, such as the farm, the woods, and the underwater sea world. We could see that some of you, who find learning easier, enjoy learning independently and we think that you could have even more opportunities to do this. We also think that a few of you who are learning to read need books that will make it easier for you to practise your new skills. We could see how well you have made progress in writing, although we think that some boys do not always have work in writing that matches their interests. We thought that your behaviour was outstanding in lessons and at playtimes. We were very impressed with how you help each other to behave and learn well.

We have asked the school to do these things to help you do even better.

- Make sure that, in all lessons, those of you who find work easy have more opportunities to work independently.
- Make sure that pupils who are learning to read are always given books that help them to practise their sounds and letter combinations more easily.
- Help boys do even better in writing by linking more of their work to their interests.

You can help by continuing to do your best.

Yours sincerely

Helen Howard
Lead inspector

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