

The Phoenix Collegiate

Clarks Lane, West Bromich, B71 2BX

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students do not make good progress. Despite some significant improvements, achievement is better in some subjects than others and science results in 2012 were weak.
- The sixth form requires improvement. As in the main school, students' achievement varies between subjects and is not yet good.
- The quality of teaching, while improving quickly, still varies and is not yet good enough to promote good achievement.
- Not all teachers take enough account of what students already know and can do when planning lessons, or ask questions that challenge and involve all students.
- Students do not receive enough support in lessons to improve their reading and writing skills. Written feedback does not consistently give students helpful and specific ways to improve their work.
- Subject leaders have not all been equally good at making sure students achieve well.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's very strong leadership means that the school's weaknesses are being tackled quickly and effectively.
- Gaps in achievement are narrowing quickly, particularly for students supported by additional government funding.
- Teachers are held strongly to account for the quality of their work and this is helping to improve teaching.
- The governors know the school well and challenge its performance routinely and rigorously.
- Students' behaviour has improved and is now good. They feel safe and school leaders manage potentially difficult behaviour well.
- Students' attendance is also much improved.
- The school's drive to raise aspirations for what students can achieve is making a difference to their lives.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 lessons. Four observations were made jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other members, and a representative from the local authority. An inspector spoke to a representative from one of the organisations that provides education for some students away from the school site.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 52 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and results from the school’s own survey of parents and carers. The results of the 142 completed staff questionnaires were also analysed.
- Inspectors analysed information about examination results, how well students are doing now, their attendance and those who have been excluded. They reviewed a range of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, its improvement plan and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

James McNeillie, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Elizabeth Macfarlane

Additional Inspector

Stephen Howland

Additional Inspector

John Taylor

Additional Inspector

Lesley Voaden

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- The Phoenix Collegiate is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- When the school was last inspected in January 2012 it was given a notice to improve.
- Just over half of the students at the school are White British, with the next largest group being of Indian heritage.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is broadly average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Currently 43 students attend courses and placements away from the school site for part of the week. The providers involved are: The Vine; Whiteheath Education; Black Country Wheels; Startright; Wodens Rise; Nova; Walsall College and Making Learning Work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all students make good progress, including in science and the sixth form. Do this by making sure that:
 - teachers plan work that challenges all students no matter what they already know, understand and can do
 - all teachers follow the best practice in the school in giving students specific support to develop their reading, writing and communication skills
 - teachers ask carefully considered questions that encourage students to think more deeply and encourage a wide range of students to take part in lessons
 - students receive consistently helpful and specific feedback on how to improve their work and then respond to and act on this advice.
- Strengthen the school's leadership by making sure that all leaders of subjects and areas are as good as the best in tackling weaknesses and reducing variations in students' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students start at the school with standards which are well below average. They do not make good progress and in the past their progress has been weak in many subjects including English, mathematics and science. As a result, by the time they leave school a large number of students still have still not reached the levels of attainment expected for their age.
- Achievement is improving quickly. Students are now making better progress in a range of subjects in every year group, and progress in English and mathematics is much closer to good than has been the case in previous years. The progress students make in science is also improving, although some variation remains.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Last year not all students did as well as they should have. Progress was poor in Year 12 mathematics and Year 13 economics and design technology. In contrast, students in both years made good progress in business studies. The achievement of students currently in the sixth form is improving. Inspectors observed students making good progress in a number of lessons.
- Students of Indian heritage and those who speak English as an additional language generally achieve well. These students' results in 2012 examinations show that they made considerably better overall progress than their classmates. However, this good progress is not consistent in all subjects.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs broadly matches that of their classmates. Students who have a statement of special educational needs are making slightly quicker progress than all other pupils. In part, this is because of the specific support they receive in and out of lessons.
- Standards attained in GCSE examinations in English and mathematics by students known to be eligible for the pupil premium in 2012 were approximately two thirds of a grade below those of other students. This is a significant improvement on the previous year's results and the gap continues to narrow. Their increasing rate of progress is a result of school leaders' careful spending of this additional funding, the improving quality of day-to-day teaching and the fact that these students are now attending school more frequently than before.
- Students supported by the catch-up premium (for those who arrive at school with skills below the levels expected for their age in English and mathematics) in Year 7 are making good gains, particularly in reading and writing.
- The school's early entry policy for mathematics has motivated students to achieve more, and not limited expectations or progress.
- The achievement of students who follow courses away from the school site is also improving. This means that those who were at risk of disengaging with education have continued learning and are developing worthwhile skills for future employment.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not helped all students to make quick progress

and it is not yet consistently good. However, teaching is improving quickly and some is outstanding.

- Where teaching is not good, it is because teachers do not plan activities that build on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Students of all abilities often complete the same work. As a result, their progress slows.
- Weaker teaching is also characterised by teachers not asking enough questions of a wide range of students, or questions that challenge students to think in more detail.
- Most teachers follow the school policy of identifying a strength and weakness on students' written work. On occasions, students respond to and act on the advice they receive. However, that advice is too often not specific enough about how to improve in the subject.
- Some teachers successfully help students to develop and use essential reading, writing, communication and mathematics skills in subjects such as history and science. This is not consistent. For example, students are sometimes expected to produce extended pieces of writing or read complex texts in subjects other than English without the guidance and advice they need to be successful.
- In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and use their good subject knowledge to make learning interesting and stimulating. Teachers plan and structure these lessons well, often by introducing and then helping students to develop and use new skills or understanding.
- In an excellent Year 7 science lesson, students were completely engrossed in considering, 'Why are we different?' They made rapid progress as a result of outstanding teaching. Students of all abilities could take part and learn quickly as a result of the teacher's careful planning. There was no time wasted during the lesson and students had good opportunities to reflect on the quality of their own and each other's work.
- In good GCSE English lessons observed, students were being prepared well and in an interesting way for imminent examinations. Good quality texts were used as examples for students to identify effective writing and then use these to improve their own work.
- Students who need extra help with reading and writing receive good support in the school's Literacy Centre. Similarly, students who are learning English as an additional language are taught well in small groups.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have good attitudes to learning in lessons and this has played an important part in raising their levels of achievement. They have the skills and maturity to work well in groups and often help each other when their work is difficult.
- Students from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together. They are interested in and celebrate each other's traditions, and this helps to prepare them for life in a diverse society.
- The school's leaders have worked hard and to good effect to improve students' behaviour. Clear and high expectations are established and students are responding well to these, as shown in the declining trend of exclusions from well above average to broadly average levels.

- Students who spoke to inspectors described feeling safe and well cared for in school. One student told inspectors he appreciated that teachers took him 'at face value'. Students understand how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet and mobile phones.
- Different forms of bullying are understood in detail by students as a result of the high profile given to anti-bullying through subjects, assemblies and other activities. School leaders' careful recording shows that incidents of bullying are falling quickly.
- Attendance has improved and is now broadly average. Far fewer students are persistently absent from school than has been the case in previous years.
- A very small percentage of parents responded to Ofsted's questionnaire. Some of these parents raised concerns about the behaviour of students. Inspectors considered this aspect thoroughly and are convinced that, while not perfect, students' behaviour is good.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has focused sharply and effectively on driving improvement since his appointment. He is uncompromising in his determination that teaching will continue to improve. Students, and staff, appreciate his visible presence around the school. Staff are proud to be members of the school.
- Younger students very much value the way the headteacher visits and takes part in the Literacy Centre's reading sessions. This sends a clear message about the importance he places on good reading and writing.
- Senior leaders work well as a team and model the school's high expectations in their work. Systems for checking on the quality of teaching and for challenging weak performance are good. Teachers unwilling or unable to improve have moved on, and pay awards are given only when staff have met their targets.
- Teachers have received good quality training to improve their day-to-day teaching. They show high levels of commitment to making these improvements and, as a result, students' achievement is rising.
- Leaders know exactly what they need to do to tackle the school's weaknesses as a result of honest and accurate self-evaluation. The good school improvement plan has clear actions to show how remaining weaknesses will be addressed and strengths enhanced.
- The high aspirations for students are clear in the challenging targets set for their progress and the opportunities given to enrich their education through trips, events, visits to top universities and the involvement of local employers.
- Students study a good range of courses at GCSE and in the sixth form. In lessons and other events such as assemblies, they develop a strong awareness of a range of cultures and moral and social responsibility. A large number of students have leadership roles as part of the school council and as representatives of different subjects.
- Many subject leaders have made a good difference to students' achievement. However, the remaining variations in achievement show that not all leaders have been as good as the best. Senior leaders have taken decisive action when there have been weaknesses in the performance of particular subjects and this has resulted in improvements, for example in science and in the

sixth form.

- The school continues to develop its work with parents, including by pursuing a national award for working in partnership with parents. Stronger links with parents have helped to increase levels of attendance and rapidly decrease the number of students who are persistently absent.
- The local authority has provided a wide range of good support for the school. The impact of this can be seen in improvements to the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Regular meetings provide good challenge to leaders. The school improvement adviser's excellent reports were of great benefit in helping the local authority to understand the quality of the school's work.
- The headteacher has also established productive links with a local outstanding school. Teachers and leaders from that school have helped The Phoenix Collegiate to improve teaching and the leadership of subjects.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know how well students are achieving compared to the national picture, and where teaching is strongest or requires improvement. Governors offer firm challenge to the headteacher and support him in making decisions about pay and promotion that reward teachers' good performance and challenge inadequacy. Together with the headteacher, governors have made prudent financial decisions to continue to improve the school's financial stability and in the spending of additional government funding. They ensure that safeguarding procedures comply with national requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136091
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	399741

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1589
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leigh Pepper
Headteacher	Gary Hill
Date of previous school inspection	25 January 2012
Telephone number	0121 588 8384
Fax number	0121 567 5284
Email address	info@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk

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