

Physis Heathgates Academy

Inspection dates 23–24 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Adequate	3
Pupils' achievement	Adequate	3
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Adequate	3
Quality of teaching	Adequate	3
Quality of curriculum	Adequate	3
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Adequate	3
Leadership and management	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

This school is adequate because

- Students' achievement is adequate. It is strong in mathematics but reading and writing skills are not improving at the same rate.
- Leaders and managers are developing adequate ways of checking the quality of teaching and students' work. However, plans for the future have not been clearly laid out in a comprehensive improvement plan.
- Students are improving their behaviour and personal development because staff work well as a team to reinforce positive conduct. It is not good because students have not yet developed high levels of self-control.
- Teachers and other staff do not always expect enough of students and so they do not always make rapid progress and rely too heavily on staff support.
- Staff are successfully promoting students' appreciation of diverse cultures. There has not been the same rigour in exploring different religious beliefs.

The school has the following strengths

- The care, therapeutic and education teams work closely together to form an effective community.
- The school provides a supportive environment in which students feel safe.
- Teachers and leaders make imaginative use of the rural environment to engage students

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected following one day's notice.
- Four lessons were observed taught by two teachers and supported by one additional member of staff. Discussions were held with the headteacher, teaching and other members of staff and with students.
- A range of documents was evaluated, including the school's policies, individual students' learning plans and progress records. The inspector also looked at samples of students' work.
- Additional information was considered from the five questionnaires returned by staff. There were no results displayed for response to the Ofsted Parent View website.

Inspection team

Joan Hewitt, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Physis Heathgate Academy opened in August 2012 and it is part of a small therapeutic community that specialises in working with students who have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school does not provide or make use of any alternative provision for students.
- The school is owned by the Physis Group, a private company providing childcare and related training services. It is registered to take boys between the ages of 10 to 16 years. It has applied to the Department for Education to include girls of the same age range; this proposed material change was not considered as part of this inspection.
- It is a small school that caters for residential students.
- All students have statements of special educational needs related to their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Students are taught in one class and all are in Key Stage 3.
- This is the school's first full inspection since its registration.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' reading and writing skills by:
 - giving students opportunities to write extended pieces
 - adopting a systematic approach to the teaching of reading.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - developing teachers' use of questions to promote extended answers
 - ensuring teachers set challenging targets for students
 - planning activities to promote students' independent learning skills
 - making sure that teachers have regular opportunities to observe good or better teaching.
- Sharpen the systems of monitoring the quality of teaching and students' work, and use the evaluation of these checks to produce a clear school plan for improvement.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

Students make adequate progress from their low starting points. Since the school opened, students have made adequate progress in improving reading and writing skills, and stronger progress in mathematics and science. They have made a positive start to addressing gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This is a direct reflection of the quality of teaching and the curriculum provided by the school. Staff have kept an eye on the future by making sure that students think about the skills they are good at and recognising the qualities they need to develop to become a good team member. Students are motivated and engaged, especially by practical lessons such as design technology and art. Progress in writing is not as strong because there are not enough opportunities for students to write extended pieces. Students are supported in understanding the relevance of their work because it involves real-life situations and takes full advantage of the school's rural setting. Students are making good progress in developing skills such as resilience and solving practical problems. Reading has improved but levels remain low and this hampers students' progress in other subjects.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Adequate

Since the school opened, students have settled in well and behaviour is generally adequate and sometimes good. During lessons students are generally compliant and have made progress in following instructions promptly. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to work independently and solve problems for themselves. Students have made sound progress in developing their emotional and social skills and this is helping them to benefit from an increasing range of opportunities provided by the school. Students have quickly developed warm and trusting relationships with staff. Students are becoming more respectful of the needs of others and their own responsibilities. However, there are occasions when students do not speak to adults appropriately and rely heavily on adult support to adopt suitable behaviour. For example, students sometimes interrupt adult conversations. There are appropriate arrangements between home and school and this provides a secure framework in which behaviour and attitudes are managed consistently. Staff are patient in helping students to overcome their difficulties and the high level of staff supervision ensures that any incidents of unacceptable behaviour are tackled quickly. Students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is adequate. Leaders have provided suitable opportunities for students to learn about other cultures nationally and internationally. This has helped students to question some of their deeply entrenched negative views. For example, a student who had racist views has visited other parts of the country where the community is made up of a rich diversity of ethnicities and cultures. This has had a positive impact on his behaviour. Students' understanding of different faiths is not as well catered for. Students enjoy practical experiences and engage in them very well, showing tenacity in completing the work. However, they do not demonstrate the same determination in tackling the more academic demands of reading and writing. The broad curriculum ensures that students have a sound understanding of British society, public services and institutions. The proprietor has taken steps to ensure that no partisan political views will be promoted and that there will be balanced views presented during any political discussion with students.

Quality of teaching

Adequate

The quality of teaching is adequate and contributes to students' adequate progress. Teachers have got to know students' strengths and weaknesses well in a short period of time. Students have made important gains in moderating their behaviour because of teachers' careful corrections. There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of skills in literacy and numeracy. Sometimes work is not demanding enough, particularly in reading and writing. Students' presentation of their written work has improved but teachers do not give them enough opportunity

to write at length. Teaching is best in mathematics and practical subjects where learning activities are hands-on and engage students' interests. A combination of encouragement and good humour contributes to students' steady progress across a range of subjects. Teachers' questioning skills are developing and students respond well when questions are probing and designed to challenge. However, this level of questioning is not consistent and teachers sometimes give students the answers too easily. Teachers use themes to link different subjects to help students appreciate the relevance of their learning. For example, students began constructing a chicken coop and this linked mathematics and design and technology. The teacher also included learning experiences about the responsibilities of parents have for looking after their children. Students' work is marked regularly and they know how to improve their work. Teachers have a good understanding of the levels students are working at. However, this information is not used to set challenging targets so that the school can monitor students' progress over time.

Quality of curriculum

Adequate

The quality of the curriculum is adequate. Students have access to a broad and balanced experience over a range of subjects. The strength of the curriculum lies in the creative use teachers make of the school's rural environment. For example, the school's chickens have been used well to provide a range of learning experiences. Selling eggs, taking care of new-born chicks and building coops for them has engaged students in mathematical, business and enterprise skills, and biology. In addition it is helping students to take on responsibility. The quality of planning is sound. Planning takes appropriate account of developing literacy and numeracy skills, but there is not enough emphasis on how other subjects can support the development of reading and writing skills. Students' statements of educational need are used effectively to produce individual education plans to guide the planning of lessons. Schemes of work show how skills and knowledge will be built up from students' starting points. The schemes of work for mathematics, English and science are thorough but those for other subjects are patchy and lack detail. The curriculum allows teachers to place a strong emphasis on developing students' emotional and social skills. The school's use of visits and trips is developing and adding an interesting dimension to students' learning.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Adequate

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are adequate and all the independent school standards are met. Students' attendance is excellent. There are adequate procedures in place to safeguard students and deal with bullying. A cohesive approach links the work of home, school and therapeutic care in helping students understand how to change harmful behaviour. A robust recruitment procedure ensures that all staff are properly vetted before they start work at the school. These checks are recorded in the school's single central record which meets all the requirements. Staff are trained to the required levels in fire safety, the use of restraint and first aid. The proprietors share the responsibility as the school's designated person for child protection and have been trained to the required levels. Routines for monitoring and recording fire safety have been established effectively. Risk assessments are completed and reviewed as necessary for an appropriate range of activities, including off-site visits. The management of behaviour around the site is sound and contributes to students' well-being and enjoyment. Occasionally, behaviour which pushes the boundaries or represents a minor risk is not dealt with firmly enough. For example, a student did not respond to a member of staff's request to tie his shoelaces before going down the stairs. As a consequence of such inconsistencies, the overall management of behaviour is adequate rather than good. Staff employ an appropriate range of sanctions but there is not the same clarity around the use of rewards. The working relationship between home and the school, including the handover arrangements, is sound. This supports students arriving at school ready to learn. Relationships with external agencies, including placing authorities, are effective and ensure timely intervention to make sure that individual students' needs are met.

Leadership and management**Adequate**

Leadership and management are adequate. Leaders have made a sound start with this new and improving school. They provide a safe and pleasant environment in which students make personal and academic progress. The headteacher checks the quality of teaching and learning regularly and supports staff in making improvements. However, this has not been done systematically or with sufficient rigour to lift the quality of provision to good. Although the school opened in August 2012, the first student was not admitted until February 2013 and the school's evaluation and improvement plans are in the early stages of development. Much of the headteacher's checking on the quality of different aspects of the school's work is done informally and has not been analysed in detail to identify where improvement is needed. Consequently, students' achievement and behaviour, the quality of teaching and the curriculum are only adequate. Leaders have an ambitious vision for the school but this has not been laid out in an improvement plan with clear measurements for success. Staff are clear about the aims of the school and have a consistent approach to implementing policies. All the adults in the school work together as a team and morale is high.

Leaders have made sure that the premises and accommodation are of a high standard and that all the independent school standards are met. Information for parents, carers and placing authorities is appropriate. There have been no complaints raised since the school opened but there are effective systems in place to manage any concerns if they arise.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	138580
Inspection number	420282
DfE registration number	893/6029
Type of school	Day school for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	10–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Wallace Robinson & Clifton Supple
Headteacher	Wallace Robinson

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