

# Phoenix High School

The Curve, Shepherds Bush, London, W12 0RQ

**Inspection dates** 21–22 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students' overall GCSE achievement has fallen in the last two years because many have not studied enough subjects. Results fell sharply in GCSE English in 2013.
- The most able students do not make as much progress as others in the school because teachers do not always set them challenging work.
- Students' literacy skills, including their writing, grammar and punctuation, are not promoted consistently in other subjects.
- Not enough teaching is good or better. Sometimes work is not closely matched to students' abilities, and teachers do not ask sufficiently probing questions to assess and strengthen students' understanding.
- The sixth form requires improvement because not enough students make good progress, particularly at AS level.
- Students have too few opportunities to research and work things out for themselves. They are sometimes too reliant on their teacher to direct their next learning steps.
- Marking is inconsistent across the school. It does not always give students clear guidance about precisely how work can be improved. Not enough attention is given to promoting good presentation for students to have a reliable record of their earlier achievements for revision.
- Leaders and managers have not rigorously checked the impact of all initiatives to know which are the most successful in improving students' achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- Phoenix is an inclusive school. Many students who are disabled or who have special educational needs make good progress because they have effective support.
- Students' behaviour is good so that the school is harmonious and students feel safe. They have positive attitudes to their learning and are supportive of one another.
- Students make consistently good progress in mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- The curriculum, including in the sixth form, promotes students' personal development well.
- The leadership team and governing body have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are using this information to prioritise action to bring about rapid change, so that the school is well placed to improve quickly.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons, some of which were joint observations with members of the senior leadership group.
- Meetings were held with four student groups, including a sixth form group, school leaders and staff, as well as with representatives of the governing body and from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including those that show how the school checks on how well it is doing, plans for future development, and students' progress data. They scrutinised students' work, information about how the school cares for and protects students, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and minutes of recent governing body meetings.
- The inspection team took account of 52 responses to the online Parent View survey, together with questionnaires completed by staff.

## Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Hallett

Additional Inspector

Gill Walley

Additional Inspector

Meena Wood

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Phoenix High School is an average-sized school with more boys than girls.
- About nine tenths of students are from minority ethnic groups, with the predominant groups being Black African and Black Caribbean. Many other backgrounds are represented in smaller numbers. Around two thirds of students speak English as an additional language, which is high in comparison with other schools.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is high.
- Around one in five students in Years 7 and 8 benefit from the nationally funded catch-up programme.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is high, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Currently no students attend any alternative off-site provision. When needed for short periods of time, a few students attend the Childerly Centre, a facility run by the local authority for students at risk of exclusion.
- There have been significant changes in the school since the previous inspection. Provision has been extended to include a sixth form in a new building. Many members of the leadership team are new to their roles, including the executive headteacher who took up his post in September 2013.

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

- Improve teaching, including in the sixth form, so that students consistently make good or better progress in lessons, by ensuring that:
  - the work for all students is closely matched to their abilities
  - teachers' questioning is more probing to strengthen students' understanding
  - lesson activities include more opportunities for students to shape their own learning and work things out for themselves rather than being overly reliant on the teacher for direction
  - students' work is marked regularly and that students are given clear guidance about how their work can be improved.
- Improve students' achievement, particularly in English and for the most able, across all their subjects, by:
  - checking on students' spelling, grammar and punctuation and requiring them to write at greater length in all subjects to enhance their literacy skills
  - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations for students' achievement so that more reach the highest levels
  - improving the presentation of work in students' books.
- Ensure that the tracking information about students' progress is used to identify which initiatives and support programmes are the most effective.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students join the school with overall attainment below the national average. Achievement requires improvement because, by the end of Year 11, aspects of their attainment are still below average. This includes the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C including English and mathematics. Students achieve less well in English than in mathematics, where their progress is good. Last year there was a sharp decline in the GCSE English results, although students are on course to reach higher standards this year.
- In recent years, students' overall attainment has declined because many have followed a narrower range of courses than normally found nationally. In particular, few students have studied a programme across the full English Baccalaureate range, and more-able students have not achieved well. To address this situation, the curriculum has been changed and students now in Year 10 are following more GCSE courses.
- For some time, many students were entered for GCSE English and mathematics in the winter of Year 11. This academic year, students were withdrawn from early entry because it was felt that they would not attain their highest GCSE grade at this stage.
- In science and humanities, students make progress in line with that found nationally, although GCSE results are below average. Until now, although achievement in modern foreign languages has been good, very few students have taken language courses.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because students make less progress from their starting points in their academic courses than nationally, particularly at AS level. The school has only entered students at A level for two years. Results improved in 2013 over the previous year and, although below average, enabled all students to follow higher education courses of their choice. Students make better progress in the vocational courses, where their needs and interests are more closely matched. From these, students have progressed successfully into further study, apprenticeships and employment.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs from their starting points is in line with that of other students, and in many cases it is better. Their progress is tracked and analysed closely, and experienced teachers and assistants use a range of approaches to boost progress when individuals begin to fall below their expected levels.
- The school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for each student is reflected in the focused support for the lowest-attaining students, who make more progress than middle- and higher-attaining students. The school is effectively narrowing the achievement gaps for those groups where there have been differences. For example, the difference between the progress of boys and girls is less than found nationally. Students who speak English as an additional language achieve more highly than other students, as a result of the support they are given, including for those who join the school speaking little English.
- The emphasis given to reading and speaking in lessons promotes language development well for all groups. Reading is promoted well in lessons and in registration and personal and social development sessions. However, the impact is reduced because teachers do not consistently pick up on students' errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation when they mark work in other subjects. Similarly, opportunities are missed to develop students' writing skills by requiring them to record at length the outcomes of discussions beyond English lessons.
- The school uses the Year 7 and 8 catch-up funding effectively to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills early in their school career. As a result, there have been improvements in their confidence and attainment, for example, their ability to read at levels appropriate to their age.
- The gap between the attainment of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding and others is narrow. In 2012, results for these students were less than half a GCSE grade lower in both English and mathematics, where nationally the gap was over a grade in both. In 2013, the gap was marginally wider in mathematics, and remained the same in English. The school's tracking information shows that pupil premium students make faster progress than others,

gradually narrowing the gap as they move through the school.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement, including in the sixth form, because not enough lessons are good or outstanding, and there is a very small minority of inadequate teaching.
- In many of the lessons requiring improvement, teachers do not take enough account of the full range of ability and the needs of all students. Consequently, often all students are given the same work and then more-able students have to wait before being given more challenging tasks.
- Nevertheless, the school has a firm base of typically good teaching to guide further development. Some teachers question students to assess what they already know, and then extend learning by focused questioning so that students work things out for themselves. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, students gradually developed their understanding of the formal language of geometry from the everyday use of words, such as segment. However, sometimes teachers do not use students' ideas well to build sequences of questions to deepen students' understanding.
- Students commented that they learn best when they have to research and do things for themselves, but that they do not have enough opportunities for this type of learning. Lessons are sometimes too closely directed by the teachers. As a result, students do not shape their own learning often enough because they are merely responding to a series of short tasks and do not develop higher-order thinking which gives more challenge to their work.
- While the vast majority of students' books are marked regularly, the quality of feedback students are given about their work is inconsistent. The recently introduced assessment sheet for teacher and student reflection about successes and areas for development is used effectively by some teachers. However, in other cases the sheets are not completed in detail, particularly in identifying precisely how work could be improved and in giving students immediate opportunities to respond to the guidance given. Generally, teachers do not give enough attention to the presentation of students' work so that untidy and poorly sequenced work reduces its value for students to use for revision and to see their achievements.
- Home learning is an important school expectation, and students have good facilities in the school to support their learning beyond the classroom. Students, mainly in Key Stage 4, respond well to the additional lessons after school and at the weekend. They value the personalised support to fill gaps in their learning and the tuition given for examination preparation.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students are positive about school life and their learning. They respond well to the school's many activities to foster aspiration and promote achievement. Relationships are strong and students have a good rapport with adults. They are polite and considerate of others.
- Students feel very safe around the school, knowing that the school has clear expectations and boundaries. Levels of supervision are good and students frequently interact with adults in a natural way, so that staff management out of lessons is light touch as students take responsibility for their own actions. Students appreciate that any form of harassment or use of derogatory language is not tolerated. When occasional incidents of bullying occur, including racist- or cyber-bullying, they are dealt with effectively. Consequently, the school is harmonious and students get on well together.
- Typically, students are engaged and enjoy their learning. There is little low-level disruption in lessons, although when learning lacks interest for students, they sometimes chat for a time before settling to their tasks. In these instances, those not working hard enough do not disrupt others around them.
- Students take part in a very wide range of activities promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to develop leadership skills. They regularly discuss ethical and moral issues in lessons and in registration time. These sessions are well organised and link to issues

raised in personal and social development lessons and assembly themes. For example, students were seen discussing 'Is it really ever possible to know what it is like to be another person?', helping them to reflect on their own thinking and to gain confidence in putting forward their ideas with sensitivity. Students undertake a number of roles of responsibility, including as prefects and as peer interpreters, helping to ensure a smooth transition to students new to the school, including those new to Britain.

- Over the last two years the school has steadily reduced the level of exclusions, and short-term exclusions are now below national averages. For many groups, such as students with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, rates of exclusion are much lower than equivalent groups nationally. In part, the reduction can be attributed to the opening of an internal exclusion unit in the school which helps to ensure continuity in students' learning.
- Attendance is average and improving gradually as levels of persistent absence are reduced.

### **The leadership and management** require improvement

- The school has not been able to sustain the high quality of students' progress found at the time of the previous inspection, and progress has declined, particularly in English. However, the decline has been arrested by new leadership but there has been insufficient time to ensure students make good progress.
- Many leaders at senior and middle management level are new to their roles and have made a good start in strengthening the systems to monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness. Initiatives, such as a more challenging and balanced curriculum, have not yet had time to show a sustained positive impact on students' attainment to demonstrate good leadership.
- Senior leaders and governors take a strong lead on performance management, with appropriate support for staff according to need, including coaching and mentoring to improve teaching quality. Teachers are positive about the opportunities they have for training and development. The school's tracking and inspection observations indicate that teaching is improving within a short space of time. Prompt action is taken to address inadequate teaching.
- Joint observations during the inspection show that senior leaders are accurate in their assessment of teaching quality. Together with governors, the leadership team has a realistic view of the school's effectiveness. Middle leaders, many still inexperienced in their roles, are developing their effectiveness in monitoring and developing their areas of responsibility.
- A new system has been introduced to collect and analyse information about students' achievement. Previously, the impact of initiatives has not always been reviewed rigorously because tracking information was not sufficiently detailed.
- The development of the sixth form has had a positive impact on the curriculum across the school. Existing pathways to post-16 education have been extended to ensure that the needs of all students are met effectively. Leaders have an ambitious vision and engage with a range of partners to bring relevance to learning, such as in the on-site farm and fitness centre used by the community. Links with universities and the Duchy College support students in accessing courses beyond school, particularly for those where there has not been a history of progressing into higher and further education.
- The local authority is effectively providing focused support which is planned closely with school leaders and governors. In addition to monitoring the school's self-evaluation, recent support includes that given for English, the development of the sixth form, and specialist provision for students with English as an additional language.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - An external review of governance is not recommended as governors have a very clear strategic view of how the school should develop in the next few years to ensure that students have the broadest possible education. They know how school performance sits alongside that of other secondary schools nationally, where teaching is effective and how teachers' performance is being managed to improve students' achievement. The governing body is effective in holding the school to account for its performance. For example, it receives regular

reports from and questions the heads of departments where examination performance shows any weakness. Through its work in committees, the governing body has a firm grasp on the allocation of finances, including that of the pupil premium funding and how the attainment gap is being closed.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	100359
<b>Local authority</b>	Hammersmith and Fulham
<b>Inspection number</b>	412037

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,003
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	153
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rosemary Farrar
<b>Executive headteacher</b>	Alan Streeter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16–17 January 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8749 1141
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