

Phoenix Arch School

Drury Way, London, NW10 0NQ

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Teaching is consistently good, with some that is outstanding. The quality of teaching has risen year-on-year since the previous inspection.
- The pupils achieve well. They make good progress through the school, often from low starting points. The few children in early years provision make good progress in their communication and social skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress that is at least as good as that made by other pupils. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also achieve particularly well.
- Teachers know their pupils well. On almost every occasion, they plan personalised, tailored activities which are carefully matched to their pupils' learning needs.
- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make good progress in their communication and social skills as they move through the school. Many parents commented on the positive changes in their children's behaviour and personal skills after joining the school.
- The pupils demonstrate outstanding behaviour. They feel very safe and secure because of outstanding provision by the school staff. Adults are skilled in using symbols, signs and well-structured language to ensure pupils understand what they are expected to do and how to behave.
- The subjects pupils learn are well planned to interest and motivate them. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance has risen consistently since the previous inspection. It is now above average.
- The school is well led and managed. The senior team rigorously check and strive to improve teaching standards and maintain a very clear overview of each child's progress and achievement.
- Governors have a clear knowledge and understanding of the quality of teaching and the pupils' progress. They consistently challenge the school to maintain improvements and are fully involved in driving the school's development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The overall quality of teaching is not outstanding.
- There are occasional inconsistencies in the recording of each small step in the pupils' progress. This can lead to some pupils being set work that is not precisely tailored for them and this prevents them from making more rapid progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons, all of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, governors and a local authority representative. Informal discussions were held with several pupils during the course of the inspection.
- The inspector took into account the 18 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire) and 18 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's evaluation of its own progress and forward planning. Records of pupils' progress, behaviour and well-being were analysed as well as monitoring reports on the quality of teaching, the performance management of staff and the curriculum. Attendance records were checked as well as all aspects of the safeguarding of children.

Inspection team

Melvyn Blackband

Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides for a very small number of primary-aged pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The growing majority of the pupils have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders and other complex learning needs. All the pupils have statements of special educational needs.
- There are currently a very small number of girls on the school roll.
- A larger-than-average proportion of pupils belong to minority ethnic groups, predominantly Black, Black-Caribbean and mixed race.
- A larger-than-average proportion of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional government funding for children who are entitled to free school meals or who are looked after. Because of the size of the school, only a very small number of pupils, in 2014, in Year 6, were eligible for the funding.
- A small number of pupils join the school at other times than the beginning of the school year.
- A small group of pupils in Early Years attend full-time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the overall quality of teaching to outstanding by making sure teachers consistently record each step in the pupils' learning so that they can plan future work with greater precision.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The experience and the determined commitment of the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, have enabled her to lead consistent improvements in the pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching. The school's middle leaders, who are responsible for keeping checks on the pupils' progress, have been very successful in maintaining excellent records, both academically and in their behaviour and well-being.
 - The school's regularly updated information on pupils' progress, together with frequent checks on every child's work, helps to ensure that the pupils make good progress. There is a culture of high expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils likely to underperform are very quickly identified and specific extra support provided. As a result, all groups of pupils achieve well. The school makes sure that all pupils have equal access to all that the school has to offer. There is no discrimination and every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed.
 - Disadvantaged pupils are the majority in the school. They make good and sometimes rapid progress because the school uses additional funding well to provide effective and well-organised support. For instance, they have increased access to speech therapy and individual tuition. There are no differences in their achievement compared to other children.
 - The senior team have ensured through rigorous checks that the quality of teaching has consistently improved. The performance of teachers and other staff is very well managed and closely linked to national standards. There are clear procedures to support teachers' improvement through coaching and frequent school-led professional development. Any underperformance by teachers is quickly eradicated and good performance is appropriately linked to pay rewards.
 - Teachers and other adults respond well to the high expectations of their work. Staff questionnaires revealed a high level of satisfaction with the school and morale is high. Many staff stated that they 'are proud to be part of the team'.
 - As a result of regular checks on all aspects of the school's work, the school evaluates its own effectiveness well. Leaders are aware, for instance, of occasional inconsistencies in the quality of assessment and are monitoring this aspect of teaching closely. Governors, and the local authority which maintains a 'light-touch' approach to the school, effectively challenge and support the school to maintain improvements.
 - The school's curriculum is effective in ensuring that learning activities are well matched to the pupils' abilities and needs. Communication is well taught through symbols and structured adult language. Pupils learn to communicate increasingly effectively in the early years and in Key Stage 1, and this prepares them well to make the most of their education.
 - The pupils have many planned opportunities to visit the local community. This increases their spiritual development as they visit and learn about a variety of religions and customs. The school ensures that pupils' moral development is outstanding through careful management of their behaviour and personal development. Pupils are encouraged effectively to develop their social skills in group work, structured play at lunchtimes and residential experiences.
 - Additional government funding to promote physical activity has been well used to enable pupils to make use of local facilities such as trampolining at a leisure centre. The school's work in promoting pupils' social awareness was rewarded in 2014 by an award from the London Lord Mayor, as 'Team London Young Ambassadors'. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' academic and sporting achievement and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - Pupils are well prepared to take their place in modern Britain. For example, in special assemblies, they are taught about rights and responsibilities for all groups of people, while in personal and social education they learn about tolerance. In addition, organised trips to places of national interests such as Hampton Court and Westminster Abbey contribute to giving pupils some insight into the history of the United Kingdom. Parents report that they enjoy excellent communication and relations with the school. They are fully encouraged to view themselves as partners in their child's education.
 - The school has very well-organised and highly effective procedures to ensure pupils are kept safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of information on pupils' progress, how it compares with similar schools, and the management of teachers' performance. They are knowledgeable about how good performance is rewarded and any underperformance tackled. As a result, they contribute well to the school's development. They effectively oversee financial control, including the salary arrangements for teaching. They maintain close supervision of additional

government funding and regularly check the impact on the pupils' progress and well-being. Governors are able to challenge school leaders effectively. They take part in regular training, such as in aspects of child protection and safeguarding and in the use of performance information on pupils' progress. They ensure that all current statutory requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Despite their often complex learning and behavioural difficulties, almost every pupil displays extremely positive attitudes to learning. Classrooms are quiet and industrious and the pupils are relaxed and interested in their activities.
- This is due largely to excellent management of behaviour and good teaching. Where necessary, pupils have a detailed behaviour plan to tailor relationships in the classroom and outside. These are very regularly reviewed and updated. Pupils with the potential for challenging behaviour are thus successfully kept from undue anxiety and their learning and personal needs are carefully catered for. As the school has become more proficient in this, the number of incidents related to weak behaviour has declined very sharply and there are very few disturbances to learning. Pupils feel secure and respond very well.
- There is a very positive atmosphere in the school. The pupils socialise happily in classrooms, in the playground and in the dining room. Staff set an excellent example through their own behaviour and all staff are extremely vigilant in praising good behaviour and carefully and patiently explaining why certain actions are not acceptable. This results in a happy learning environment where the pupils thrive.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The pupils are very well supervised at all times.
- The pupils develop a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They have regular personal, social and health education lessons and 'circle time'. Staff make good use of techniques such as 'social stories' to teach the pupils how to behave in a range of situations. All the pupils learn road safety.
- There are no recorded instances of bullying and pupils spoken to were adamant that 'it doesn't happen at our school'. This was confirmed by parents. The pupils are taught consistently about internet safety and the potential dangers of talking to strangers.
- Attendance is above average and high for the type of school. There has been consistent improvement over several years. Relationships with parents are excellent and they report that their children look forward every day to coming to school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are very well organised and secure. Child protection procedures are exemplary.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and improving. There has been a consistent improvement in its quality since the previous inspection. As a result, all groups of pupils achieve well, including in early years, and enjoy school.
- There are regular and stringent checks by senior staff on all aspects of teaching, including detailed scrutiny of pupils' work. The high expectations of teachers' performance are accompanied by weekly whole-school training in, for instance, managing behaviour and provision for pupils with autism. Teachers and other adults are confident practitioners and produce good results from the pupils.
- Teachers, in turn, have high expectations of pupils. Overall, activities are challenging but carefully linked to the pupils' earlier learning and well matched to their abilities and interests. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils used their previous learning to identify complex three-dimensional shapes; their learning was extended very well into using precise vocabulary to describe the shapes and discriminate between similar but different shapes. The pupils made excellent progress.
- Literacy is taught very well. All pupils have intensive work in matching the sounds and shapes of letters and as they progress through the school almost all the pupils become confident readers. The pupils enjoy reading and those spoken to enthusiastically reported that they like to read to their parents to show them

how well they are doing. The pupils have many opportunities to read and write in each subject. This reinforces their skills effectively across a range of topics and subjects.

- Their mathematical skills are well developed through many planned opportunities to count, to recognise shapes and to measure. As a result, pupils are confident to apply their skills in different situations.
- Teachers consistently encourage and enable pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. In almost every lesson pupils read material in books or on the whiteboard and write responses, often at greater length as they mature and become more confident. There are many opportunities to count, identify shapes and describe mathematical situations, such as the size of buildings.
- Teachers make good use of information and communication technology. Pupils gradually become familiar with using computers to find things out and compare information.
- Teachers manage their classrooms well. Supporting adults are well briefed on the activities they will oversee. Each pupil receives a high level of support and individual tuition. This gives the pupils confidence to make mistakes and helps avoid frustration and anxiety. The pupils apply themselves well because of the good quality of adult support.
- All adults use communication aids and regulate their speech effectively to ensure pupils understand what they are to do and how well they are doing it. Pupils are given clear guidance and helped to understand how to make their work better. Adults quickly respond to pupils' difficulties by asking appropriate questions or adapting learning further to ensure the pupils understand properly. Teachers effectively record each small step in the pupils' learning and plan in great detail for the next steps in each child's work. On occasion, however, this process of recording small steps in progress is not as effective as it could be. This can result in less focused individual activities being planned, which in turn slows down the rate of learning.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- While the attainment of pupils remains generally lower than that expected nationally, almost every pupil makes good progress, often at higher rates than that found in similar schools. A growing minority make rapid and sustained progress. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The pupils make good progress in reading, communication, writing and mathematics. This is because of regular daily practice in reading and writing across all subjects and a whole-school emphasis on teaching the sounds and shapes of letters and words. The most able pupils become confident readers by the time they leave and their mathematical skills develop well.
- Pupils are set challenging targets and are given extra support where they do not achieve as well as they are thought capable. This ensures good progress. From often low starting points in the early years, pupils make good progress in learning to communicate and in learning how their behaviour can affect others.
- Disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for support through additional funding, the majority of the school, make good progress. There are no gaps in their performance, in Year 6, compared to that of others at the school. There are very small numbers of these pupils in Year 6, as there were in 2014, and it is inappropriate to comment on their performance compared to national expectations.
- Pupils with additional complex needs such as autism make good progress because of well-organised and directed support. The pupils often make excellent progress in their communication and this helps remove the barriers to their learning. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties make equally good progress through effective teaching and a well-structured and personalised curriculum.
- As a result of using well-structured strategies for teaching communication to all pupils, those with English as an additional language make good progress.

The early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress from their starting points in each area of learning, particularly in their communication and personal development. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- All children achieve equally well, including those from ethnic minority groups, those for who English is an additional language and disadvantaged children who are eligible for additional funding.

- The pupils are taught for some of the time along with older children in Year 1. This brings benefits to them in encouraging growing confidence and fluency in communication and in personal and social development.
- There is a stimulating environment where children may explore and learn effectively. Adults quickly get to know the children well and prepare personalised learning programmes to promote their achievement, especially in basic skills and in their communication. The children receive a very high level of individual support and this enables them to make good progress. The assessment of their progress is detailed, accurate and thorough. The recording of the children's progress in this area of the school is consistent amongst all teachers.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have high expectations of the children's progress and they are responsive to their needs and in developing their abilities. As a result, the children show interest and enthusiasm for their learning. They are keen to join with adults in exciting experiences and they quickly learn how to behave well.
- The children are kept very safe. Through the very good modelling of behaviour by staff they learn how to keep themselves free from harm. Parents are very satisfied with the care their children receive and the progress they make. Parents are successfully encouraged to contribute to their child's learning and are welcomed into the classroom.
- The provision is well led. There is a strong focus on the good achievement of each pupil and on maintaining and improving further the standards of teaching. The care and safeguarding of the children are very well understood and procedures are outstanding.

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	101581
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	447903

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Yvonne Walker
Headteacher	Jude Towell
Date of previous school inspection	31 January–1 February 2012
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