

The Phoenix Collegiate

Clarks Lane, West Bromwich, B71 2BX

Inspection dates 24–25 March 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- A determined drive from the senior leaders and governors to raise standards across the school has ensured that students' achievement is now good. Students make good progress from their starting points.
- Inspirational leadership from the headteacher means that the school is characterised by a 'no limits' culture driven by the uncompromising belief that all students can and will be successful as they move onto the next stage of their life.
- A relentless focus on the importance of reading means that students read every day and teachers focus on developing reading and writing skills.
- Regular tracking of the information about how well students are learning, including the most vulnerable, is used very effectively by leaders to intervene quickly. An extensive range of interventions are in place to support students that are falling behind.
- Students are very proud of their school; they feel safe and well cared for.
- Highly productive relationships across the school between students and with their teachers, means that students behave well. This contributes significantly to a culture of high aspiration and success.
- Senior leaders, including governors, have taken effective steps to make teaching better and this is continuing to improve.
- The governing body use their expertise from the world of business and finance to great effect. Many carefully planned opportunities to link with business help students to develop the skills they will need to be successful in the world of work.
- Students' ability to learn well in school is improved by the tenacious and caring way in which teachers and leaders support the very different and sometimes complex needs of students and their families.
- The sixth form is well managed as achievement has improved over the last three years. Students make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers plan their activities to meet the different abilities of the students, in particular, the needs of the most able.
- The ongoing focus on developing students' confidence with numbers is not as embedded as the work on reading and writing skills.
- Although improving quickly, there continues to be gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their classmates.
- Despite students in the sixth form making good progress the number of students achieving A* to B grades at A level is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students’ learning in 57 lessons, including some joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition to this, inspectors observed the daily reading lesson, tutor time and students’ conduct around the school at the start and end of the day, during break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, other senior and subject leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and the school’s improvement partner.
- In addition to speaking with students in lessons and informally around the building, inspectors spoke to four groups of students and one inspector listened to some students read.
- Inspectors considered the views of 19 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire and 110 responses from Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team analysed a range of information about examination results, students’ progress and attendance, performance management documents and the school’s own self review documents.

Inspection team

Helen Reeves, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Margaret Dutton	Additional Inspector
Lee Nixon	Additional Inspector
David New	Additional Inspector
Shahnaz Maqsood	Seconded Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Phoenix Collegiate is a larger than averaged sized secondary school, with a sixth form.
- Half of the students are White British with the other largest group of students being of Indian heritage.
- Just under half of the students in the school are supported by the pupil premium funding (additional government funding that provides support for disadvantaged students known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority). This is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is well above the national average. This represents just under a quarter of students in the school.
- A small number of students attend courses away from school at Woden Rise, Batmans Hill, and Whiteheath.
- The school meets the current government floor standards. These are the minimum standards expected for students' learning and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate further the achievement of all students across the school including the sixth form, in particular disadvantaged students and the most able by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan activities that provide challenge and stretch for the different abilities in their groups
 - teachers across all subjects provide a range of effective feedback that helps students know exactly what they need to do to improve their work
 - ensuring that teachers and leaders use every opportunity to develop students' confidence with numbers in lessons other than mathematics and across the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's uncompromising belief that all students can achieve drives the decisions taken in school and is shared widely across the staff and teachers. The continual improvement in students' achievement and behaviour since the last inspection has had a significant impact on the confidence of students and staff; a culture of high aspiration, mutual respect for one another and success is palpable around the school.
- The school's self-evaluation of its strengths and areas for development is accurate. Senior leaders have clearly defined areas of responsibility and improvement plans and take swift action to tackle the weaknesses.
- Senior leaders use information about students' achievement well to direct their leadership activities to make sure that students achieve well. The impact of this work is clearly documented in the 'Portfolio' and is regularly shared with the designated governor.
- The tracking of all students' achievement is very thorough. The system provides teachers with very simple information to support lesson planning; this includes students' current reading age and their progress so far. At subject leadership level the system provides very detailed information about the achievement of different groups of students. This allows leaders to identify where additional support is needed. As a result of this intervention, the number of students falling behind in subjects across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 has reduced at each assessment point throughout the year so far.
- An extensive range of interventions in school provide extra subject specific help and provide support where needed for issues outside of school affecting students' achievement or attendance. Senior leaders are tenacious in their ability to find and work with other agencies when necessary. This is making a difference to some students feeling more positive about school, as a result they attend more regularly and make more progress in their work.
- Senior leaders have tackled areas in school where teaching was weak. Teaching is now improving strongly. The creation of the Lead and Principal Practitioner roles in some subjects has provided a way in which to share good practice across the staff.
- Middle leaders use information about students' achievement very effectively to focus their leadership activities. The leadership of both English and mathematics is strong and they are excellent role models for other leaders in school. Subject leaders are also responsible for the coaching and development of teachers in their team. Consequently, teams receive regular well-planned training sessions that directly address their immediate priorities.
- The school motto that all students 'Aspire, Believe, Succeed', is evident in leaders' commitment to equality so that all students reach their academic potential as well as develop the skills that will enable them to secure a job. Leaders, including governors, are dedicated to this ambition that students make a positive contribution to British society by being ready for work. Leaders have effectively adapted the curriculum for a small minority of students who are at risk of not completing their education.
- The support and intervention for disabled students and those with special educational needs is very effective. Leadership of this area of school is strong and the achievement of students is improving quickly. Early intervention, increased engagement with parents, sharing of information with staff and sharing of good practice all contribute to teachers and support staff being able to meet the needs of these students effectively.
- Leaders effectively focus on the development of basic skills, with a clear determination to improve students' reading ages. This is making a difference. Providing opportunities in lessons to develop students' confidence with numbers is not yet consistent across the school.
- The performance management of teachers and leaders is linked carefully to the achievement of students

and the effectiveness of leadership.

- The curriculum in school and in the sixth form is broad and balanced and offers a range of subjects. The wider curriculum, made up of student enrichment days to promote social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, is a key strength. Students explore an extensive range of topics developing their understanding of political systems, social and moral dilemmas and wider global issues as well as keeping themselves safe on the internet, living healthily, personal finance and exploring the values at the heart of British society. This extensive programme promotes tolerance and respect for diversity and contributes well to the respectful attitudes students show towards adults and their classmates.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to make a difference to the achievement of disadvantaged students. A proportion has been used to create the 'Transition Curriculum' for disadvantaged students in Year 7 who arrive at Phoenix with skills in English and mathematics well below the national average. A primary practitioner teaches students for a significant amount of time, to develop reading, writing and number skills. Through this students have been supported to improve in their basic skills and confidence. Students particularly enjoy being read to regularly by the teacher and writing their own stories.
- The school's work to support students across the school including the sixth form with careers advice and guidance was recognised with the CEIAG Award (Careers education, information advice and guidance) in November last year. Students across the school including in the sixth form receive good impartial advice about where to study, information about work placements and courses available at different colleges in the local area.
- The school works hard to involve parents in their children's education. Support for vulnerable students and their families in the community is highly effective. The deputy headteacher works sensitively with outside agencies to provide support for children and families in need. Getting parents into school is an ongoing priority and staff are increasingly successful at this.
- Designated staff are persistent in following up safeguarding concerns with relevant agencies in order to provide the best possible support for those involved including their families. Every care is taken to ensure that policies and practices to keep students safe are rigorous and of the highest quality.
- The small number of students who continue to study on courses away from school are monitored closely by the school. Students' attendance, achievement and behaviour are regularly reviewed to ensure that they continue to be successful on these placements.
- Leadership of the sixth form is now more effective than at the time of the last inspection. Leaders have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses. Regular checks on students' achievement, attendance and improvements to the quality of teaching all contribute to students making better progress.
- The support that the school receives from its local authority school improvement partner is very effective. These visits are carefully planned into the school's monitoring cycle and provide the senior leaders and governors with detailed and sharply focused evaluations of different aspects the school's work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors share and contribute to the uncompromising drive to make sure that all students achieve well and are ready for their life beyond Phoenix.
 - The Chair of the Governing Body has put in place a model where each senior leader has a designated governor overseeing and supporting their area in school to provide an accurate and current picture of progress. This allows governors to regularly challenge and hold senior leaders to account. Governors use this model to monitor closely the quality of teaching and the wider work of the school in supporting students in need of additional help.
 - The creation of a governor dashboard, capturing all of the information about students' achievement and attendance across the school, provides very accessible information by which governors can look at the school's current progress towards its targets.
 - Governors use their skills from a range of business and financial backgrounds very effectively in school to impact on the curriculum and the operational side of the school. Governors are proactive in

supporting the curriculum and enrichment days with a range of professionals from the world of work.

- Governors have robust and challenging targets in place for the headteacher's performance management and take an active role in reviewing the pay awards of teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students are welcoming, polite and courteous to each other and the staff in school. This contributes significantly to an atmosphere where students from diverse backgrounds learn well and develop good relationships with each other. Break time and lunchtime are orderly; students move quickly to lessons and are responsive to the adults around them. Year 11 and sixth form students conduct themselves really well around the school. They are excellent role models for the younger students.
- Behaviour has improved since the last inspection as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching as students are more motivated to learn. In lessons most students listen well, work hard and take pride in what they are doing. Incidents of low-level disruption occur when the activities are not suitably matched to the different abilities of the group and a small minority of students become restless and distracted.
- There are now fewer students who are excluded for a fixed time. This is because leaders have put in place systems that teachers use with confidence to manage students' behaviour.
- Leaders in school closely check the attendance of the small group of students who study courses away from school so that any problems can be addressed quickly. As a result of these regular checks the attendance of these students is improving.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Staff care deeply about the students in the school and work very closely with students and where appropriate their families to ensure that all students achieve their potential. Staff are skilful in their interaction with students. Staff listen carefully to students so that they can provide the best support possible and when the right support is not available in school staff are proactive in finding other agencies to access the support needed.
- Attendance has continued to rise since the last inspection and is now in line with the national average. Students are very aware of the importance of excellent attendance on their achievement. Promoting excellent attendance is a priority around school and rewards for students are linked to this.
- Bullying is rare in the school. Students are very aware of the different types of bullying and leaders have used national focus weeks on anti-bullying well to explore and discuss these issues. Students know where to go to if they want to report an incident of bullying and the school has trained student mentors to provide additional support to students who may have been bullied.
- Students across school including the sixth form know how to keep themselves safe on line and the importance of safe and healthy relationships. Students have time to explore these issues through the six enrichment days each year.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The teacher 'tool kit' provides a series of non-negotiable rules that ensure consistency across classrooms, from the way students are welcomed into the room to how data and seating plans can inform teachers' planning to improve the progress students make in lessons.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. For example, in a Year 11 English class students were been really challenged to explain their understanding of a complex text. Students were exploring with each other the use of imagery in the text and were supported to elaborate on their answers further by skilful questioning from the teacher.
- When working in groups, students demonstrate resilience to solve problems together.
- Some teachers' planning was very effective in challenging students to learn and apply their knowledge through a series of well thought out tasks. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson the teacher generated high levels of engagement by providing a group task for students to find out what they knew collectively. Students were then provided with an independent task to apply this knowledge to check their understanding. Finally, students tested out their knowledge by the completion of an examination question and then reviewed each other's work.
- Students are encouraged to think hard about the work they are completing. This was particularly evident in a Year 10 digital photography lesson where students were creating abstract images from their research of different photographers. This depth of understanding and creativity was also observed in the quality of the A Level art pieces and various artworks on display around the school.
- The introduction of the stamp in students' books has resulted in precise feedback to students about their strengths. In English, history, science and the Year 7 transition curriculum the very effective marking of students' work result in students knowing exactly what they need to do in order to improve. This practice is not yet embedded across all subjects.
- Teachers are given detailed yet simple information about students' progress and reading ages. Lead practitioners use this information very effectively to plan lessons that match precisely the abilities of the students in the group and ensure that all students are stretched and challenged. This work is skilfully shared with all staff to model excellent practice, however not all teachers do this as well as the best.
- Developing students' reading, writing and confidence with numbers skills is a priority across the whole school. Students are reading more and teachers are successfully embedding the development of writing skills across subjects other than English. For example, in history students are well supported to develop extended writing skills. Extending students' confidence with numbers is not yet as embedded as teachers' work to develop reading and writing.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school with skills in English and mathematics well below what is expected nationally. Despite this students' attainment has risen steadily over the last three years and the proportion of students achieving 5 GCSE grades at A* to C increased in 2014 to 56%, in line with the national average.
- In 2014, the number of students making expected progress and more than expected progress in English and mathematics increased. The proportion of students making expected progress was above the national average in English and slightly below in mathematics. The school's records indicate that for current students the expected progress in both English and mathematics is above the national average.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students has improved since the last inspection. Progress information in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, including for students following the transition curriculum, show that these students are now making good progress, compared to other students in school and other students nationally. Gaps in the achievement of these students and their peers remain but they are narrowing.
- In 2014 the gap in the achievement of disadvantaged students in English compared to their classmates continued to narrow to less than one grade. Compared with other students nationally the gap is a grade and a quarter. In mathematics, the gap in achievement of disadvantaged students compared to their classmates narrowed to less than a grade. When compared to other students nationally this gap has also continued to narrow to a grade and a quarter. For current students evidence from lessons and school records show that the gap is continuing to narrow to less than half a grade in English and a grade in

mathematics.

- In 2014 not all of the most able students (i.e. those who achieved at least Level 5 at Key Stage 2) made the progress they should. Observations in both English and mathematics and the scrutiny of work in students' books suggest that they are making better progress.
- Historically disabled students and those with special educational needs have not made the progress they are expected to make. As a result of better teaching across the school and the additional support for these students they are making better progress than they have previously.
- The small number of students on courses away from the school all achieve basic qualifications, which are well matched to their needs.
- The school no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations.
- With the exception of Year 11, students read every day in the dedicated reading lesson at the start of the day. Students are provided with a range of books and assessments to increase their reading age and confidence. Records indicate that this scheme is having a very positive impact on improving the reading ages of students and this information is regularly tested and reported to teachers to assist them in the planning of lessons. Year 9 boys spoke very positively about this scheme as they have enjoyed the range of books available and the challenge of improving on their previous test score.
- Year 7 catch-up funding (additional funding provided by the government to support Year 7 students who join the school with below average skills) has supported a range of interventions. Regular small group intensive intervention, use of tablet technology, and an annual summer school prior to joining Phoenix all contribute positively to accelerating the progress of students' basic skills in reading, writing and confidence with numbers. The creation of the transition curriculum is a significant factor in the progress that some of these students make.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Achievement in the sixth form has improved consistently over the last three years. From their starting points students make the progress expected of them in all subjects compared to the national average, and are above the national average in psychology and accounting. The school meets the minimum standards for Key Stage 5.
- Fewer students than seen nationally enter the sixth form with GCSE grades at A* to A. The proportion of students achieving A* to E grades has improved over the last three years and in 2014 was above the national average. The number of students achieving A* to B grades is improving but is not yet consistent with national expectations.
- The number of students continuing their study into the sixth form and also the proportion continuing from Year 12 into Year 13 continues to improve and is now in line with national expectations. Students have a broad range of academic and vocational subjects to choose from and they receive good advice and guidance to prepare them to make the right decisions regarding their subject choices.
- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and lessons are engaging, as a result behaviour is good and students enjoy their learning.
- Students receive regular feedback on their work, the quality of which is improving. The quality of teachers' feedback in business is very effective as it provides very detailed advice and guidance and supports students' development of a deeper understanding.
- As a result of improving systems across the whole school to check and intervene quickly with students whose attendance is not good, attendance in the sixth form has improved. Attendance has steadily risen over the last three years and is now broadly average.

- Students yet to achieve a grade C or above in English and or mathematics receive weekly lessons to prepare to re-sit these examinations. The number of students that have successfully taken these exams and achieved a grade C or above has doubled compared to last year.

- Students feel well supported in the sixth form and receive plenty of guidance about their chosen pathways at the end of Year 13. Strong leadership of the sixth form ensures that students are well supported in their tutorial groups and achievement is checked closely so that tutors can intervene if students are falling behind. Students speak very confidently about the excellent relationships they have with their teachers and tutors and the positive impact these adults have on students' learning.

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	453830

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	1403
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leigh Pepper
Headteacher	Gary Hill
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2013
Telephone number	0121 5888384
Fax number	0121 567 5284
Email address	info@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk

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