

# Phoenix Primary School

Birchfield Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L7 9LY

<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 March 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming and proudly told inspectors, 'We are an inclusive school where everyone is welcome', and 'We all get treated the same.'
- Parents who spoke to inspectors, or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire and the school's survey, were very positive, saying their children are happy, safe and progressing well.
- All groups of pupils are currently achieving well including those who have special educational needs or disability, those who are disadvantaged, those in the resourced provision and pupils learning to speak English. The assessment information in published data no longer reflects pupils' achievement.
- Good teaching provides well-planned activities that pupils really enjoy so they work hard and progress well.
- Strengths of the school include the early years provision and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Similarly, equal opportunities and the care and support given to all pupils, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are strengths.
- In their time at Phoenix, pupils become resilient, reflective, responsible individuals, acquire British values and respect different cultures and religions.
- The headteacher's inspiring leadership, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has motivated leaders, governors and staff to make the school the best it can be for every pupil.
- Since the previous inspection, achievement has risen and the quality of teaching and learning has improved. There is strong capacity for further improvement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching of reading has not had the impact on increasing the proportion of younger pupils reaching the expected standard in the national phonics check (letters and the sounds they make).
- Weaknesses in spelling, handwriting and grammar lower the quality of pupils' writing in all subjects.

## Full report

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

- Further raise the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - sharing and extending the good practice already found in the school
  - ensuring that all staff are fully skilled and confident in teaching phonics.
  
- Increase pupils' achievement across the school in all subjects, but particularly in writing by:
  - extending pupils' knowledge and accurate use of correct spelling, grammar and punctuation across subjects
  - increasing the proportion of pupils meeting the expected level in the national phonics check in Years 1 and 2
  - enabling a higher proportion of most-able pupils to exceed the standards expected for their age.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Following the previous inspection, senior leaders thoroughly and honestly evaluated what needed to be improved. With the full support of staff and governors, leaders swiftly developed and implemented plans for improvement to make the school better. Consequently, all groups of pupils are now achieving well and standards are rising. Leaders are tackling the legacy of slower progress for older pupils with additional support and intervention, such as small-group teaching.
- Providing equal opportunities is at the heart of leaders' vision. No pupil is ever turned away, there is no discrimination and good relationships between pupils and with adults create a very secure and happy environment for learning. Sensitively provided extra support for those who find learning difficult, those learning to speak English or those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable ensures they participate in everything the school offers. Sports kit is provided for every pupil so no-one feels different.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching by observing lessons and examining pupils' progress information, teachers' planning and pupils' work in books. Findings are shared with staff who have to implement improvements or undertake professional development to strengthen their skills. The school's system of lesson study, where staff plan a lesson that one teaches while others observe then feed back, has proved valuable for those involved, but is not yet widely used across the school.
- Senior leaders are good role models of management and teaching skills, and middle leaders carry out some teaching observations and produce action plans to raise standards in their subjects.
- Leadership in the resource base and in the provision for special educational needs is good, so pupils progress well in relation to their starting points.
- Pupil premium funds are used wisely, for example to support the breakfast club to make sure those who attend get a healthy start each morning. Disadvantaged pupils are now progressing as well as their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. School data shows that any remaining gaps are rapidly closing.
- Sports funding provides extra activities that pupils really enjoy, for example skilled sports coaching and participation in local events. Staff have gained new skills and more pupils participate in physical activities and learn the basics of a healthy lifestyle.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Pupils are very aware of the behaviour code based on the '7 Rs', which include resilience, reflection and responsiveness, so the school is a harmonious community. Pupils become increasingly responsible and respect the different religions, lifestyles and cultures found in their school. They learn democracy in action through the school council, have a real say in school planning, for example the Friday tuck shop, and are well prepared for future life in our multicultural society.
- The well-planned curriculum is suitably adapted so pupils can progress well in all subjects, and gain the numeracy and literacy skills needed across the curriculum and for the future. British values are woven through all aspects of the school's strong provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- After-school clubs are popular. Visits enrich topics such as 'In my Liverpool home', with trips to St George's Hall and Liverpool Central Library that help pupils appreciate the history and culture of their city. A residential visit is offered to older pupils, and a London trip is a reward and incentive for very regular attendance.
- The school works hard to include parents and helps them support their child's learning and attendance, especially those who may find it hard to be involved. Newsletters, the website and parents' evenings are provided and staff are always ready to meet parents. The great majority of parents say they can approach the school and be listened to.
- The local authority provides good support for the school. Leaders and governors have made full use of this, for example to provide staff professional development and governor training.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Following the previous inspection, governance was reviewed, audited and new appointments made so governors offer a range of skills to support the school. Governors know their school well through visits, regular updates on achievement, reports and volunteering in school. For example, one is an author and works with pupils to boost writing. Consequently, governance is increasingly effective, providing rigorous challenge and holding leaders to account, such as what is being done to further

raise attainment, particularly in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

- The appointment of a governor with responsibility for data has enhanced governors' ability to compare the school's performance with other schools locally and nationally.
  - Staff targets and goals are based on national teaching standards and the outcomes of leaders' monitoring. Governors ensure that salary rewards are given only when pupils progress well and that staff performance management leads to further professional development to improve both teaching and management skills.
  - Governors know pupil premium funds are used effectively because the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates is reducing securely.
  - They know primary sports funding is used to improve provision, such as regular sports coaching, and to enable staff to gain new skills, such as teaching gymnastics, which they can pass on to their pupils.
  - Governors ensure that the school gives pupils a firm foundation of traditional values, such as respect, democracy, equality and care for the environment, ready to be useful citizens in their future lives.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Records are scrupulously maintained, training is up to date for all staff and the school has very good links with local professional agencies.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good**

- School records and inspection evidence confirm that the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. It continues to rise due to leaders' skilled use of monitoring and well-planned professional development.
- Pupils told inspectors, 'We always learn new things.' They enjoy lessons, behave well and tackle tasks enthusiastically. Pupils willingly help one another and cooperate happily with staff so no learning time is wasted and lessons proceed smoothly. The pupils that inspectors spoke with said that their favourite lessons include mathematics, English, art and science, 'because we do experiments'. Teachers ask questions which make pupils think harder, or to set greater challenge for the most-able pupils.
- Mathematics lessons are carefully planned. Pupils' books show that staff provide varied activities, including solving problems, and increase them in difficulty so pupils acquire and build their skills in all aspects of mathematics. Sometimes, pupils set mathematical challenges for each other. Pupils use their mathematical knowledge across the curriculum, for example in science to calculate the changes in their pulse rate before and after exercise.
- The attractive, well-organised classrooms have lots of prompts to help pupils, such as punctuation reminders and mathematical terms. Displays of pupils' work are used to inspire them to aim higher and improve their work, and practical tasks, such as reading and sorting statements about saltwater crocodiles, keep pupils actively involved.
- A very strong focus is placed on the teaching of reading. Professional development for staff has enabled them to develop pupils' enjoyment of reading and their understanding of the text. However, the teaching of phonics has been less successful and leaders recognise the need to ensure that all staff have the skills they need to teach phonics across subjects.
- Staff have made good use of pupils' increased interest in reading to develop pupils' writing skills. Reading more widely has helped pupils improve their writing by using more interesting words such as 'indescribable pain', or by using alliteration such as 'weeping women'.
- In the resource base, pupils receive focused additional support from well-trained and able teachers who meet their individual needs very effectively.
- Teaching assistants provide well-informed support and make a valuable contribution to pupils' good progress, especially for those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable or who need extra help with their learning.
- Clear assessment systems enable staff to check and monitor pupils' progress. They carefully analyse how well different groups are doing, such as disadvantaged pupils, boys and girls, and plan work to meet their particular needs.
- Pupils report that their work is regularly marked, with comments that help them improve, so 'We learn from our mistakes', and they often get some extra questions and challenges.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The calm, caring atmosphere and strongly promoted spiritual, moral social and cultural development helps pupils become considerate and sensible. They show respect for each other, staff and the different religions and cultures represented in school.
- Pupils are keen to take on jobs and responsibilities, such as running the tuck shop or as 'reading buddies', where older pupils are paired with younger ones to help with their reading. Running for election as a school councillor teaches pupils democracy in action.
- Pupils feel safe in school saying, 'There are lots of staff to keep us safe.' They are confident that staff help and quickly sort out any problems. Very supportive, caring relationships between pupils and staff were observed in all situations. Parents agree their children are kept safe.
- An anti-bullying week and internet safety activities help pupils understand that bullying can happen in different ways, such as repeated name calling or on the internet. They told inspectors bullying is not a problem because staff always listen to any worries they may have and step in to help. Most parents agree that any bullying is dealt with well.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils, parents and staff agree that behaviour is good and has improved. There is a clear code of behaviour management in place, using warnings and coloured cards. Pupils say this is fair, commenting that they are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and actions, saying, 'We learn to control ourselves and our emotions.'
- Good behaviour for learning has made a strong contribution to better progress. Pupils work hard in lessons, and cooperate well with staff and each other. One spoke for many, proudly saying, 'We are resilient and never give up.'
- Pupils mix happily, are always polite, smiling and helpful, holding doors open for others and saying 'You're welcome' when thanked. They show real care and consideration for others as they move around the building, up and down the staircases, at lunchtime and outside.
- Since the previous inspection, attendance has improved. Published data shows attendance to have been low for the last few years. However, recent figures show it is now average for the majority of pupils. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has been high but is now quickly reducing. The school works very hard to boost the attendance of those who find it hard to attend regularly, with rewards and incentives such as a trip to London. Pupils and families receive a clear message that education is very important and vital for their future lives.

## Outcomes for pupils

## require improvement

- After the previous inspection, school leaders acted successfully to raise staff expectations of what pupils can achieve and make them accountable for pupils' progress in their classes. There are signs that attainment is rising and progress is accelerating. This is in contrast to the school's published assessment information which shows low levels of pupils' attainment and progress.
- The high level of movement into and out of the school at different times means year groups change considerably as they move through the school, so those who were assessed in Year 2 are often not the same pupils who are assessed in Year 6.
- Current school assessment information, records and inspection evidence confirm that all groups of pupils are now progressing well from their various starting points and are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils are now progressing well in key stage 1. This progress contrasts with pupils' attainment in the past. For example, at the end of Year 2 in 2015, pupils' reading and mathematics knowledge and skills were below the national average. However, their attainment was significantly lower in writing. Most-able pupils have not reached the higher levels in the past. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher Level 3 was below the national average in all subjects.
- In 2015, half the Year 6 pupils had special educational needs or disability and several joined the school

late in key stage 2, all of which had a negative impact on their attainment. Seven of the 15 pupils were not able to sit the tests. The attainment of those who completed the tests was below national averages in reading, writing, mathematics, and spelling, punctuation and grammar. It was significantly below national averages at the higher level in all subjects.

- Leaders are well aware of the legacy of slower progress and gaps in learning for older pupils. Rigorous actions, including professional development for teachers and support and intervention for pupils, means this is swiftly being eradicated, seen most notably in reading. Lesson observations, pupils' workbooks, and school records show progress across key stage 2 is now accelerating, and current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach the expectations for their age in all subjects.
- Most pupils now write confidently and often at length, for example when Year 6 wrote accounts of Lent, but writing skills lag behind reading and mathematics. Pupils do not have a secure grasp of how to use punctuation and often make errors in spelling. Sometimes, work is not presented well, and older pupils in particular do not use a consistent, joined handwriting style. These factors lessen the quality of written work in all subjects.
- Pupils acquire basic number facts well and cover a wide range of mathematical concepts. In Year 5, pupils were challenged to scale recipes for potions up and down, using both decimals and fractions, but not all can recall multiplication facts quickly.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics check was below the national figure in 2013, 2014 and 2015, and only a few met the standard when re-checked in Year 2. Younger pupils have daily phonics lessons and those who struggle with reading know how to tackle new words by 'sounding them out'. Leaders are well aware of the need to further improve staff skills in the teaching of phonics in order to build on the current improvements shown in school information.
- A strong focus on reading throughout the school has resulted in rapid improvement in reading standards and skills. Staff provide regular small-group reading sessions for older pupils to extend their skills to overcome the remaining legacy of underachievement.
- The most-able pupils are given work that is well matched to their particular skills in all lessons. In addition, they receive extra challenges to boost their thinking and reasoning skills including mathematics and writing clubs, and trips to art galleries to work with specialist teachers.
- Well-led provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability ensures that they receive skilful support. Learning tasks are carefully matched to their individual needs so they progress at the same rate as their classmates. This is also the case in the resource base class, where pupils receive well-trained and focused additional support which is well matched to their particular needs.
- Effective use of pupil premium funds provides specialist support in mathematics and reading, and subsidises visits and transport. Disadvantaged pupils currently in school are progressing at a similar rate to their classmates. In 2015, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 was over a year behind other pupils nationally in all subjects. In key stage 2 in 2015, disadvantaged pupils did not progress at the same rate as their classmates in reading, writing or mathematics. However, more disadvantaged pupils than their classmates exceeded the progress expected of them in reading and mathematics but still lagged behind other pupils nationally. School and inspection evidence shows these gaps are narrowing securely due to good-quality extra help, targeted just where it is needed.

## Early years provision

**is good**

- Children enter the Nursery with skills below those typical for their age, and are often significantly weak in communication, language and number, and some aspects of personal development.
- Many children enter and leave the early years at different times so the proportion who reach the good level of development by the end can vary from year to year. This proportion is rising and most children start Year 1 with the skills they need for further learning.
- Children make good progress as they move through the early years classes. They are very well cared for so they feel very safe, secure, quickly gain confidence and are ready to learn. Parents are encouraged to be involved with their child's learning and told inspectors that they are very pleased with the early years.
- Behaviour is good and children tackle tasks enthusiastically, happily sharing equipment and taking turns so there is no interruption to their learning. Children tasted different sorts of bread then made their own, and staff made full use of these activities to stimulate ideas and develop language, asking 'How does it feel?' and counting and weighing ingredients.

- The outdoor area has improved since the previous inspection. Children enjoy learning outside in the well-organised and resourced space, for example planting seeds and using natural materials in the mud kitchen where staff help them talk about colours, textures and shapes.
- Daily stories and sessions in which children learn about letters and the sounds they make prepare children well for reading and writing. Displays of children's writing and drawings celebrate their efforts and encourage them to try harder. The well-equipped writing area is often a favourite choice with boys when children select their own activities.
- Each child has a 'learning story' book, where staff monitor and record progress thoroughly. They use the information to plan activities that reinforce and extend children's skills and to provide extra help where needed. Teaching assistants contribute well to children's good start in school.
- Good leadership, passionately committed to providing the best for every child, inspires staff to have high expectations for what the children can achieve. Activities that meet the different needs of the most able, those who have special educational needs or disability and those who are disadvantaged enable them all to make rapid progress in their academic and social development.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133702
<b>Local authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002229

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	197
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Barbara Leigh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Jones
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 228 3831
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.phoenixprimaryliverpool.co.uk">www.phoenixprimaryliverpool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:phoenix-ao@phoenix-pri.liverpool.sch.uk">phoenix-ao@phoenix-pri.liverpool.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29–30 October 2013

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools. Numbers have increased since the time of the previous inspection.
- Over one third of the pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual transition points.
- Most pupils are White British, others are from a very wide range of ethnic groups and about a quarter speak English as their second language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is well above the national average.
- The school has resourced provision for up to 30 pupils who have complex special educational needs or disabilities. Most of these pupils are taught in the mainstream classes, others are taught in the resource base class.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2015. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school offers a breakfast club every day.
- Since the time of the previous inspection, there have been many staffing changes and several new governor appointments.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed lessons in all classes, including one observed jointly with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher, visited small group sessions and observed pupils outside and at lunchtime.
- The inspectors talked with some parents and met with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' workbooks from different year groups, and listened to readers from Years 1 and 2.
- The inspection team looked at a range of school documents, including checks on the quality of teaching, current achievement data and the systems used to gather an accurate picture of how well pupils are doing.
- The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils were scrutinised.
- Inspectors looked at the 20 responses in the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school's own survey of parents' views and comments on freetext and the 13 responses from the staff.

## Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Ofsted Inspector

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