

Phoenix High School

The Curve, London W12 0RQ

Inspection dates

19–20 April 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The headteacher and other leaders have not ensured that pupils across the school make the progress they are capable of. They have been slow to address issues identified following the poor 2015 GCSE examination results. As a result, far too many pupils still do not make the progress they should.
- Leaders at all levels are not clear about how their roles and responsibilities contribute to the wider strategic improvement plan.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not of a high enough standard across subjects and year groups. Underachievement in some subject areas is rife.
- Assessment information is not always accurate, understood by staff or shared appropriately with the governing body. Consequently, staff lack confidence in its validity.
- Pupils' attendance across some year groups is too low.
- Opportunities to seek the views of parents are rare.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning rely too heavily on the quality of the teacher. Low-level disruption in some subject areas is common.
- The conduct of some pupils requires improvement. Staff do not consistently reward good behaviour or effectively tackle inappropriate conduct around the large site.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Not enough students make the progress they are capable of, particularly on academic courses. There is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning across different subjects.
- The governing body has been unable to ensure that senior leaders halted the decline in standards across the school for current pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Safeguarding procedures are effective, particularly with regard to tackling radicalisation and extremism.
- Many pupils enjoy coming to school, describe it as a 'happy place', and want to work hard and do well. They value the support and wide range of opportunities on offer.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders at all levels must ensure that:
 - they are clear about their roles and collective responsibilities, and how they contribute to the wider strategic school improvement plan
 - assessment information about pupils' starting points is fully considered when setting their targets
 - the information about pupils' progress is accurate, shared and understood by all staff
 - pupils, and groups of pupils, make at least expected progress across the curriculum
 - they carefully monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and intervene quickly to ensure that it is of the highest standard
 - teachers are well supported and held appropriately to account for pupils' underperformance
 - pupils' attendance across all year groups and for all pupil groups improves rapidly
 - pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are of a consistently high standard across all subjects
 - pupils' conduct around the school site is consistently good and that all staff implement the school's rewards and sanctions system
 - further work is undertaken to involve parents and carers in the work of the school
 - new initiatives to improve pupils' progress are carefully monitored to ensure that they are having the desired impact.

- Improve the 16–19 study programme by:
 - reviewing the courses on offer to ensure that they meet the academic and work-related needs of the students
 - ensuring that information, advice and guidance enable students to start courses that they will successfully complete and make appropriate progress in
 - ensuring that teaching across all subjects is of a high quality
 - successfully promoting the sixth form across the main school, so that more pupils apply to attend.

- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- The headteacher and other leaders have not tackled quickly enough issues identified following the poor performance seen in the 2015 GCSE results. While they have secured better English GCSE results for the current Year 11, pupils' progress across other subjects, including mathematics and science, and across all year groups, is still too low.
- While leaders at all levels are clear about their responsibilities, they lack clarity as to how their actions contribute to making the necessary strategic improvements. Consequently, lines of accountability are not always as secure as they should be. For instance, the heads of house manage pupils' behaviour, but there is a lack of clarity over who oversees the impact of strategies to improve this area.
- Leaders have not ensured that assessment information is accurate when pupils start at the school and when they progress through the school. In some subjects, work has been externally moderated. However, staff lack clarity about the targets set for pupils. Information that is shared with staff and governors is not always a true reflection of pupils' current progress.
- Leaders have not been effective in their attempts to improve attendance. While some improvements have been made, these have not been rapid enough given pupils' very low attendance in the past. Too many pupils are still persistently absent from school and miss large parts of their learning.
- School leaders' self-evaluation is over-generous. They believe that enough has been done to secure improved progress across the majority of subject areas. However, this view is not substantiated by the evidence presented by the school, documented external reviews or evidence seen during the inspection. As one senior leader said, 'we are consistently inconsistent'.
- Opportunities for parents to contribute to the life of the school are limited. Only four parents responded to the online questionnaire Parent View, while others reported a breakdown in communication between themselves and school leaders.
- Pupil premium funding is not focused tightly enough on improving progress for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, while pupils' progress this year has begun to improve overall, some groups of disadvantaged pupils, particularly White British pupils, are making much less progress than pupils nationally and their peers. While a range of initiatives are resourced using the pupil premium funding, school leaders have not analysed the impact of these on particular pupils within the group.
- There is a coordinator for pupils who have been identified as the most able. Some staff training time has been allocated to encouraging teachers to provide 'stretch and challenge' to this group. Initiatives such as the 'Brilliant Club' for pupils in Year 10 aim to raise aspiration. However, information provided by the school indicates that leaders are not doing enough to ensure that the most able pupils make the progress they are capable of.
- The recently appointed teaching and learning lead has begun to offer strong leadership of this area. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development and have begun to make some necessary changes. They oversee the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP). Teachers have received training and are encouraged to reflect on their own practice. Pupils act as 'teepers', feeding back to senior leaders their views on the quality of teaching and learning they experience across the school site.
- Leaders undertake lesson observations, are clear about where there is stronger teaching and offer coaching support to those requiring it. Currently, nine teachers are undertaking the coaching programme. Performance management arrangements are linked to the impact on pupils' outcomes and there is an expectation that staff participate fully in professional development opportunities should they need to do so.
- Middle leaders understand their responsibilities and are keen to ensure that pupils make better progress. They are focusing on being more accurate in their predictions for pupils' outcomes this year. They recognise that the focus has been on pupils in key stages 4 and 5. Consequently, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not making the progress they should.
- Teachers new to the profession feel supported by school leaders and are given a range of opportunities to extend their practice both in school and within the Tri-Borough (Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Kensington and Chelsea). Each has an individual action plan matched to their training needs which, they say, supports them to improve.

- A small number of pupils attend a local pupil referral unit. Their progress, attendance, behaviour and welfare are carefully monitored by school leaders.
- The local authority issued the school with a warning notice in September 2015 due to the rapid decline in pupil outcomes. Since then local authority officers have visited the school on a number of occasions and brokered support from St Marylebone Teaching School, who have offered support to the English, science, mathematics and humanities departments. Local authority officers have accurately highlighted areas of strength and those requiring urgent action, which they have shared with senior leaders. However, some of the identified issues have not been addressed urgently enough by school leaders.
- School leaders work hard to promote British values in order to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Recent elections were held as part of the Youth Parliament and a Year 10 student has been elected as Youth Mayor of Hammersmith and Fulham. The personal, social, health and economic education programme is taught explicitly across all year groups and covers themes such as citizenship, democracy, multiculturalism and work skills.
- Currently, pupils in key stage 4 opt for one of three curriculum pathways: vocational, studying for the English Baccalaureate, and a choice of GCSEs. In the sixth form, further opportunities to undertake a combination of academic and vocational qualifications broaden students' choices.
- The provision for pupils who have a special educational need or disability, or an education, health and care plan, offers effective support. Pupils' needs are assessed on arrival and their progress is carefully checked. A number of interventions to support pupils' literacy and numeracy development are offered, using Year 7 catch-up funding. Whole-school training on meeting pupils' differing needs was held recently and an external review, making further recommendations, has been sent to governors. Currently, this group of pupils is making better progress than many of their peers.
- School leaders have fully engaged in the 'Prevent' programme. Staff are well trained and vigilant in their work to prevent radicalisation and extremism. The school's work in this area is shared across the Tri-Borough.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body has not ensured that the decline in standards and progress has been halted by senior leaders. As a result, far too many pupils across the school do not make the progress they are capable of from their starting points.
 - Governors describe the 2015 GCSE examination results as a 'terrible shock'. They had regularly challenged senior leaders over issues such as low attendance, but were too quick to accept assessment information provided by the headteacher. Consequently, they were expecting far better results that would have brought pupils' outcomes in line with national expectations. They immediately took decisive action, working tirelessly to provide appropriate support to the senior leadership team, commissioning external guidance and looking for an academy sponsor, which has now been secured. They now have a realistic understanding of the changes that need to happen in order to improve standards across the school. They know where there have already been some improvements and which pupil groups are at risk of not making expected progress.
 - The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A designated safeguarding governor works closely with school leaders to ensure that all checks are in place relating to the safer recruitment of new staff and that regular and up-to-date training is provided. A recently introduced staff code of conduct endorses 'exemplary' behaviour, both in and outside school. The governing body has a clear understanding of its statutory responsibilities regarding safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- The quality of teaching across the curriculum and within subject areas is not good enough. As a result, pupils do not make the progress they should. Expectations around attitudes to learning also vary and slow progress on teachers' tracking sheets is often explained by pupils' poor motivation, rather than lack of ability or understanding.
- Some teachers do not provide opportunities for pupils to consolidate their skills; questioning is often at a superficial level and responses do not require a depth of understanding. The use of key terminology, for instance in mathematics, is not practised or encouraged enough, and misconceptions are not addressed. Some teachers do not check carefully enough whether pupils have understood new ideas or concepts before moving on.

- Some teachers plan activities that meet the needs of pupils of average ability, with little support for those struggling to understand and little challenge for the most able pupils. Consequently, pupils are not able to build on prior knowledge or practise new skills to help them accelerate their progress. Some quickly become demotivated or bored and their attitudes to learning deteriorate.
- A recently introduced whole-school system for giving pupils feedback about their work is in its early stages and, while potentially an effective system, it is inconsistently used by staff. Some information provided by teachers does not address misconceptions or extend pupils' learning. Some pupils have received very limited feedback from their teachers about their work.
- Assessment information is inconsistently used. Staff are not clear how whole-school targets are set, with some believing they are too aspirational and unrealistic. Information provided by school leaders, analysing the progress of particular pupil groups, is inconsistent.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- There is a designated and trained child protection officer at the school and a school counsellor, though few pupils were able to identify them when asked during the inspection. Most said they would talk to a member of staff should they have a concern or worry.
- Staff record information about bullying incidents on the school's system. School leaders also keep logs of any racist or homophobic bullying. These do not match the information on the school system and little evidence was presented of the outcomes from these incidents.
- Pupils could give examples of when bullying occurs. Generally, however, they commented that school staff act swiftly should any concerns be raised, particularly through the new house structure. Pupils are provided with a range of information about how to keep themselves safe, both in and outside school. Designated areas, such as the Year 7 playground, ensure that younger pupils have a secure place to relax with friends.
- Pupils are given a range of information on how they can keep themselves safe, through assemblies and the personal, social and health and economic education programme. This includes advice on how to avoid radicalisation or child sexual exploitation and issues to do with female genital mutilation.
- School leaders work hard to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a range of trips, activities and visiting speakers. The school is open for extended hours in the evenings and weekends to encourage the pupils to participate in a range of activities, including the youth club. Inter-house competitions and sports events all contribute to the school's ethos. The Phoenix Farm is enjoyed by many of the pupils, who help tend the animals.
- Pupils are encouraged to celebrate differences in this diverse school community and they do so in a respectful manner. The nominated house charities give pupils the opportunity to work together to support others, and the regular school newsletter promotes pupils' achievements across the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Some pupils' conduct around the large school site is not appropriate. Staff do not consistently ensure that pupils' behaviour is of the highest standard. Boisterous and lively behaviour is not always addressed swiftly enough by supervising staff, particularly during breaktimes and on busy corridors. This causes some pupils to feel less safe.
- Equally, in lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning vary depending on the teacher. Low-level disruption and silliness in some lessons prevents pupils from making the progress they should.
- Attendance levels are too low. School leaders have begun to track those pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern and have begun to tackle the issue through a renewed system overseen by the heads of house. As a consequence, attendance this year has improved and is closer to the national average. However, attendance of pupils in key stage 4, particularly in Year 10, is still a cause of concern. Some pupils regularly arrive late.
- School leaders rarely exclude pupils from school for fixed periods of time. Instead, pupils are secluded from the rest of the school and given appropriate work to complete. Some pupils spend long periods of time in the student support unit (SSU).
- Many pupils are keen to learn, work hard and are polite and courteous. Throughout the inspection they were keen to share their experiences of school life, with many describing Phoenix High School as a

'happy' place. They are proud of the recently introduced house system, which has had a positive impact on behaviour, and enjoy mixing with pupils from other year groups. A rewards system encourages positive behaviour, which is celebrated in house assemblies.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is significantly below the national average. The proportion of pupils who achieved five GCSE grades C or above, including in English and mathematics, was significantly below the national average in both 2013 and 2015. In 2014, the gap closed and was closer to the national average. However, this improvement was not sustained and results dropped significantly last year.
- In 2015 the progress of pupils from different starting points across a range of subjects, including both English and mathematics, was significantly lower than the national average.
- While disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to their peers in 2015, this was due to the fact that they all made far less progress than pupils did nationally. In mathematics, there was a gap between progress made by the disadvantaged pupils and other pupils at the school, with both below the national average.
- The most able, in particular, made far less progress than this group nationally. Across the majority of subjects they were not enabled to gain the highest grades.
- In 2015, pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan made far less progress than all pupils nationally in English and mathematics.
- White British and Black African pupils made significantly less progress than these groups do nationally. Although they are identified as priority groups, information presented by school leaders indicates that this level of progress will continue.
- Current information provided by school leaders indicates that improvements have been made in English for the current Year 11. However, across a range of other subjects progress is less secure. Most notable are the emerging gaps between the disadvantaged and their peers, and the most able. A concern also is the stalling progress of pupils in key stage 3, who are not currently the focus of senior leaders' attention.
- Predictions for GCSE pupil outcomes in 2015 were not achieved across many subjects. While school leaders are attempting to validate the accuracy of current assessment information through, for instance, moderation, there is still a question about how robust it is.
- Leaders are focusing on improving literacy across the curriculum. A range of extra-curricular activities, including participation in national events such as World Book Day, are encouraged. The librarian has a record of every pupil's reading age and monitors carefully the number and type of book borrowed. The well-stocked library is well used and there has been a significant decline in the number of books going 'missing'. A phonics programme, which helps pupils understand the sounds that letters make, is in place for those with very low reading skills. Sixth form students act as reading mentors, particularly for those learning English as an additional language. Timetabled literacy lessons focus on improving pupils' individual needs.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Some students, particularly those studying for academic qualifications, do not make the progress they are capable of across a range of subjects. This is due to a number of factors. Students begin courses that they do not have the academic ability to succeed on, due to inappropriate advice and guidance. Some do not have the ability to meet the challenges posed by A-level courses. Equally, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across subjects and courses and this has a further impact on the progress students make.
- Although the sixth form is very inclusive, it does not attract the most able pupils from Year 11, even though university application success rates are positive.
- Attendance at the start of each day is too low, though students do attend timetabled lessons throughout the day.
- Opportunities for students to assume further leadership responsibilities through the 'Headteacher Ambassador' roles are not taken up. Few applied and none of the students spoken to indicated that they would want the role or knew who had acquired one.

- The progress made by students on vocational courses is above national averages. Teaching on these courses is undertaken by industry professionals from the particular field of work. For instance, a media BTEC course is being delivered via the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith and a garden designed by BTEC level 3 learners studying horticulture will be an exhibit at RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show.
- The school's large, modern and impressive sixth form area provides a nurturing environment for students. The well-stocked library, suite of computers and recreational areas create an atmosphere where students can thrive. Students are keen to do well and have high aspirations for their future choices. Last year, 35% of those who applied were given placement offers by Russell Group universities across the country.
- The director and deputy director of the sixth form are passionate and committed. They have a clear understanding of what still needs to be done to improve the 16–19 study programme and ensure that inconsistencies in students' progress across subjects are minimised. They are proud of achievements to date and the destinations many students opt to take.
- A number of students are retaking English and mathematics GCSE. Success rates for the current Year 12 this year in English are high, with the majority already having secured a C grade. Information provided by school leaders indicates that progress for those retaking mathematics may not be as good.
- Some teachers in the sixth form have strong subject expertise and plan challenging and interesting activities that stretch students' understanding. Individual feedback is given to students so they are clear about the progress they are making and what they still need to do. Incisive questioning ensures that students understand even the most complex of concepts.
- Students have positive attitudes to their learning and deliberately chose the sixth form as they believe it is a 'happy' place where they are supported well. They report that staff give them good information about how to keep themselves safe and act swiftly should they have any concerns.
- Sixth form leaders ensure that students are given a range of employability skills through the wealth of links they have orchestrated between the school and employers. Students are encouraged to take on weekly placements if on vocational courses, and longer periods of work experience while studying for A levels. A minimum of 10 hours' voluntary service in community activities is expected and school leaders support students to find appropriate placements.

School details

Unique reference number	100359
Local authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	10002000

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	906
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Victor Daniels
Headteacher	Alan Streeter
Telephone number	0208 735 1501
Website	http://www.phoenixhighschool.org
Email address	head@phoenix.lbhf.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 November 2013

Information about this school

- Phoenix High School is smaller than the average secondary school.
- Over half of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is above average. This government funding is used to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, including: Black Caribbean, Black African, 'any other White' background and 'any other ethnic group'.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is above the national average. However, the proportions of those with a statement of special educational needs or with an education, health and care plan are below the national average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at a local pupil referral unit.
- Pupils enter Year 7 with attainment that is significantly below the national average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- When the school was inspected in November 2013 it was judged to require improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment across a range of year groups and subjects, including the sixth form. Some observations were carried out jointly with school leaders.
- Discussions were held with the chair of the governing body, chair of the teaching and learning committee, the headteacher, deputy headteachers, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils and students in the sixth form, a range of staff including newly qualified teachers and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the four responses to Parent View, and spoke to several more parents.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation which included records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, minutes of meetings, and information on the progress made by pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and systems relating to the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, policies and procedures, including checks done on the suitability of staff.

Inspection team

Helen Matthews, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Penny Barratt	Ofsted Inspector
Laurence King	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Shadick	Ofsted Inspector

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