

# The Phoenix Special School

Braithwaite Avenue, Keighley, West Yorkshire BD22 6HZ

## Inspection dates

9–10 June 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher provides clear and decisive leadership and has high expectations for pupils. She has successfully moved the school forward, supported by staff and governors.
- Staff have worked hard to quicken progress and improve outcomes for pupils since the last inspection. This is now a good school and it is improving rapidly.
- Teaching is good. Teachers make sure that work is closely matched to each pupil's ability and interests. The most able pupils are challenged and motivated by the work and achieve well, especially in mathematics.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support learning for all groups of pupils and are well briefed on the next steps and challenges for them.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They work hard, enjoy being challenged and produce work they are proud of. Pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills are improving rapidly across all subjects and groups.
- Pupils' welfare and behaviour is at the heart of the school's work. Procedures for arrival and exit from school are first rate and pupils' conduct and attitudes are good.
- Provision in the early years foundation stage is good. Children are prepared well for Year 1 due to good teaching and leadership.
- Governors provide strong support and ensure safeguarding arrangements are thorough and effective.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Assessments are thorough and accurate in reading, writing and mathematics, but this process does not extend to all subjects across the school. Subject leaders are not consistently checking pupils' learning and achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- Many children do not return promptly for the rest of the day after attending medical or dental appointments. This slows their progress.
- Governors' expectations and knowledge about the impact sports and physical education funding is having on pupils' learning and progress are not good enough.

## Full report

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

- Improve leaders' and managers' impact to achieve outstanding outcomes for pupils by:
  - extending and implementing assessment systems to include all subject and curriculum areas
  - ensuring all subject leaders are skilled and able to help class teachers to make accurate and effective use of this information so that pupils achieve well and make swifter progress
  - developing governors' strategic understanding of their role in ensuring that additional funding for sport and physical education has a greater impact on the progress and attainment of all pupils.
- Improve attendance by ensuring that children return promptly for the rest of the day after attending medical appointments.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has successfully created a culture that puts pupils first. She has high aspirations for them and her vision is shared by governors and staff. She is supported well by a team of knowledgeable senior leaders who have quickly got to grips with their roles. Together they have transformed the school and aspects that previously required improvement are now strengths.
- Checks on the quality of the school's work are effective in tackling concerns and securing improvements. Consequently, leaders have strengthened the quality of teaching and make sure that pupils' achievement is tracked accurately. This has played a key role in improving teaching and pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics and in strengthening early years provision. These assessment systems do not yet extend to all subjects in the curriculum.
- Leaders' sharp analysis and accurate evaluation of strengths and weaknesses leads to clear feedback to the staff on how to improve and to spread good practice. Focused use of the local partnership of schools contributes to developing teachers' knowledge and skills. Teachers value this continuing professional development and teaching is consistently strong across the school.
- Staff have embraced higher levels of challenge and accountability. The performance of staff is managed well and support is provided if the quality of work falls short of the expected standard. Teachers' pay is linked to specific, measureable targets based on the specific contribution they make to the work of the school and the progress that their pupils make.
- Leadership responsibility is distributed across the school more widely than at the previous inspection. Subject leaders, recently appointed to their roles, are making a positive start in some subjects to evaluate pupils' learning and provide useful help to staff to improve teaching and support assessment. However, this is not consistent across many subjects and is at an early stage.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well in both key stages and in the early years. It is broad, enabling pupils to experience a good range of activities within and out of school, and is enriched with trips and visitors. Increasingly, it is adapted to better match individual needs through personalised programmes and therapy. For example, a combination of increased time to study, access to specialist mathematics teaching and demanding texts and reading schemes are helping the most able pupils in school to achieve and succeed. A specific programme of work to develop pupils' awareness of British values has begun but it is too early to show the impact of this very recent work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is interwoven in all aspects of their learning in lessons and regular assemblies. Pupils learn about right and wrong, and to respect and be tolerant of each other. They develop confidence and resilience in lessons and learn about different religious beliefs. Examples are well explained and carefully documented in their books, learning journals and displays. Equality of opportunity is promoted well throughout the school.
- Parents are kept well informed about their children's learning through weekly class newsletters, regular discussions with teachers and attending annual reviews. They are very supportive of the school and are made to feel welcome. Those who met inspectors felt that their views about their children's learning were respected and listened to.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors are very committed to the school. They visit often and experience at first hand the impact of their policies and the work undertaken to improve teaching and learning through close contact with classes, staff and pupils. They undertake regular training and ask pertinent questions about the running of the school.
  - Governors monitor the school's long-term plans and know the school is improving. They ensure that reviews of the headteacher's performance and procedures for the management of teachers' performance are thorough. They understand how this helps to improve the quality of teaching.
  - Pupil premium funding is used effectively. Governors know much about the additional support, the difference it is making for individuals, and that the gaps in progress are closing throughout the school. Governors' knowledge of the use and impact of the sport and physical education funding is limited. Consequently, this restricts their impact in being able to exercise high levels of challenge or make strategic decisions about this aspect of the school's work.
  - Governors keep good oversight of pupils' safety and review practice. As a result of their review of transport arrangements for pupils arriving at and leaving school changes have been introduced. Pupils

now enjoy a safe, fast and efficient service.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies and procedures for keeping children safe are well established and embedded in practice. Regular training ensures staff know the risks facing pupils and how to protect them, and are vigilant in raising concerns. Children who require the additional help and protection of statutory services receive it. Documentation examined shows this has significant impact. Risks to children's health and safety are acted upon and this leads to improvements.

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

- Teachers and support staff are committed to ensuring pupils achieve the best they can and they have high expectations of pupils. They have worked hard to improve since the last inspection and teaching is now good.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics has improved. Subject knowledge in these areas is strong and staff are starting to use professional networks to strengthen their knowledge of a wider range of curriculum areas and subjects.
- Teachers and support staff work very closely together to make sure pupils achieve well. This aspect has improved significantly across all classes since the previous inspection. It has helped to establish a bedrock of consistency to planning, teaching and assessment.
- Teachers' assessments in reading, writing and mathematics are accurate and lead to planned activities and tasks that are purposeful and pitched well to challenge pupils. Many pupils concentrate well; they are interested and confidently make choices and answer and ask questions. Pupils work hard and a happy atmosphere of 'no slacking' suffuses most lessons.
- The way adults develop and reinforce pupils' communication and literacy skills has improved and is now a major strength in teaching and learning. Well-chosen books and texts inspire work in a range of subjects. Pupils know how to use resources and equipment such as communication aids and technology, symbols, signs, objects of reference and speech to respond to questions and demonstrate their understanding.
- Teaching assistants and teachers know pupils well and use this knowledge effectively to frame questions and interactions to match individual pupils' interests and needs. Adults working with pupils who have the most complex needs demonstrated how to explore different materials, and pupils reached for and grasped objects and copied actions.
- Tasks are adapted well to challenge the most able pupils. They are developing their writing and numeracy skills in many subjects. For example, a Year 3 pupil demonstrated good phonics knowledge when he hit a drum to count syllables in words and moved on to identify and circle the number on his worksheet. By the end of key stage 2, some more-able pupils research the views of their classmates about the activities and play equipment they like and collate the information to inform school decisions.
- Ending a task and changing over to new activities is generally well managed. Most staff do this well, but occasionally new teachers are less skilful in these transitions and time is lost in regaining pupil's attention and interest.
- Many pupils have made swift progress to communicate their ideas, thoughts and views and they demonstrate interest and curiosity. Pupils' books and displays show they are learning across a wide range of subjects, although their progress and achievements are not always captured in current assessment systems.
- Pupils know when they have done well and relish the stickers, certificates, praise and rewards they earn for good work and meeting their targets. Homework is set, but very little completed work is returned to school. Both the policy and practice are currently under review by leaders and governors.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** **is good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Opportunities for pupils to give their views about their learning and school life and to make choices are promoted well in the school. Pupils told inspectors they like earning rewards for good work and behaviour and making choices about how they will 'spend' them on activities such as extra time in the soft play area or using the bicycles at lunchtime.
- Pupils' care, welfare and safety is paramount and staff are well trained. They know how to help pupils

who need additional support and are effective in providing it. Liaison with health professionals and the school's nursing teams ensures that pupils with complex medical needs receive swift and timely attention at school. This enables them to participate as fully as possible in lessons and at play.

- Arrangements for pupils' arrival at school and when they leave at the end of the day promote a smooth, calm, orderly and safe transition between home and school.
- Lunchtimes are well organised. Pupils have choices to sit together in small groupings or with their support staff in quieter areas to eat their lunch. High levels of support ensure pupils eat safely and well. Wherever possible, pupils make choices about the food they eat.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' physical and emotional well-being effectively. Work in classroom bases and assemblies is well planned to develop pupils' resilience and independence. Pupils say that recent work helped them to learn how to be friends and to make choices about friendships.
- School records show that bullying incidents are rare. Pupils say staff are good at resolving incidents and they are confident that there is someone at school they can talk to if something is worrying them. Most parents agree their children are safe and well cared for at school.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents who responded to the online survey, and staff and pupils who completed the inspection questionnaire, agree.
- In the majority of classes and lessons, pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning because they are interested in their activities and respond well to adult support. Most pupils enjoy learning and are proud of their achievements.
- Pupils know what is expected of them and respond positively to the clear and consistent boundaries staff set them. Consistent use of symbols and visual reminders are used well, but sparingly in lessons, to re-focus pupils on the task in hand when their attention wanders.
- Behaviour around school and at social times is good. Routines are well embedded from the moment pupils enter the school in the morning to when they leave.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are friendly and respectful. Staff know pupils well, including how to manage behaviour and calm them quickly if they are upset or anxious. When a child is in crisis, staff speak to them in ways that soothe and help them regain control quickly.
- Attendance is below the national average. Leaders are using a range of strategies well to tackle the issues and absences. As a result, holidays taken in term time have reduced significantly. However, many days of schooling continue to be lost due to pupils not returning to lessons following regular dental and medical appointments. Work to enlist the support of parents and carers in tackling this issue is at an early stage.

## Outcomes for pupils

**are good**

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has improved and is good. Evidence in pupils' books and learning journals shows that most pupils in all classes are making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics and in their personal and social development.
- Pupils in all key stages make good progress. This is particularly so in writing, in response to a structured approach to the teaching of these skills. Pupils are responding by developing greater control in shaping letters and writing more extensively.
- Reading is much enjoyed by pupils in key stage 1 and 2. It is well supported in classrooms and in reading areas throughout the school. Opportunities to develop and practise skills, especially early reading and the sounds that letters make, are integrated in activities and tasks.
- A sharper focus in identifying barriers to their learning and a wider range of strategies and good teaching are enabling pupils to achieve their individual targets. Frequent checks on pupils' learning quickly identify where and why learning starts to slow. Teachers know how to modify the work so that pupils catch up.
- There are no gaps between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their classmates. Assessment systems are reliable and have been strengthened further since the start of the academic year. There is little difference between the achievements of most groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The most able pupils are making faster progress, especially in mathematics, due to better challenge in lessons. Some of these pupils, particularly high-achieving pupils in Years 5 and 6, have benefited from opportunities to work alongside other pupils in the nearby mainstream school and are working more

securely at levels 1 and 2. Pupils' books also show strong progress to develop writing, with increasingly accurate spelling and the consistent use of basic punctuation.

- Many pupils are taking significant steps in acquiring the skills to communicate using speech, symbols, pictures or communication aids and technology. Most groups of pupils make good progress to develop communication skills. Pupils who have the most profound disabilities are making expected progress. While this is helping to minimise their frustration and anxiety, school leaders recognise the need to develop and accelerate their progress further and have plans to do so.
- The progress of a small number of pupils with complex health conditions needs improvement. Leaders are actively exploring ways to support better continuity in their learning during periods when hospitalisation is necessary. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- Assessment of pupils' achievement across a range of subjects is starting to take place in classrooms. However, it is not currently analysed across the whole school to fully reflect pupils' learning.

## Early years provision

**is good**

- Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points on entry, and especially in their communication, early reading and writing skills and personal development. This is due to consistent use of well-chosen resources and methods including objects, symbols, signing and speaking.
- Staff are skilled in assessing and matching work to children's individual needs. Each child's learning journey book is richly detailed with examples of work, photographs and observations that show the good progress they are making towards their expected development. Assessment and record-keeping is consistent across the teaching team.
- Teaching is good. Adults work effectively to stimulate children's interest and curiosity in learning and play. Children settle quickly into routines and are busily engaged in conversations and activities within minutes of entering the classrooms or outside learning and play areas.
- Children enjoy stories and explore a new book every two weeks. They know some of the sounds letters make and are attentive and keen to learn new words. They recall key information about story characters and sing along to rhymes with enthusiasm.
- Staff are very attentive to children's care needs. Specialist training and healthcare staff are well integrated into teaching teams. They effectively and discreetly provide the specialist help that children with complex health conditions need. This helps children to spend more time in lessons and contributes well to help them to develop and make progress in their learning.
- Two-year-olds show interest in the activities and staff are skilled in adapting learning quickly to avoid anxiety and to promote their learning. Good attention is given to their care and individual learning needs.
- Strengths in the early years provision have been maintained since the previous inspection and developed further due to good leadership and management. Teachers and teaching assistants in the Nursery and Reception classes work well together. They are trained in how to care for and keep pupils safe and meet children's welfare and safety needs.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135227
<b>Local authority</b>	Bradford
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008149

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	81
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brent Fitzpatrick
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Stirland
<b>Telephone number</b>	01535 607 038
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.phoenixschool.org.uk">www.phoenixschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@phoenixschool.org.uk">office@phoenixschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22–23 January 2014

## Information about this school

- Phoenix School is a special school for pupils with a wide range of severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. In addition, many pupils also have medical needs, physical disabilities, speech and language difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. A small number of pupils have hearing or visual impairment.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- There are significantly more boys than girls at the school.
- A high proportion of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and Asian heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also high.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority, is above the national average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and base rooms. They spoke to pupils and examined the work in their books, folders and displays.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, senior and middle leaders, four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered responses from parents recorded on Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and took account of seven pupil questionnaires and 45 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors examined documents relating to pupils' progress, school improvement planning, governance, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and arrangements.

## Inspection team

Gina White, lead inspector  
Tudor Griffiths

Her Majesty's Inspector  
Ofsted Inspector



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