

# Phoenix Academy

85 Bounces Road, Edmonton, London N9 8LD

## Inspection dates

12–14 December 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The proprietor and leaders have not ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress, particularly in mathematics, science or art. Teachers do not challenge pupils to make consistent use of their good writing skills beyond English.
- Governors have not kept an overview of all aspects of the school's work. Consequently, since the last inspection, areas of previous strength have declined in effectiveness.
- Teachers do not expect pupils to think deeply enough, particularly in mathematics or science. Because of this, pupils do not always achieve their full potential or apply their good writing skills across the curriculum.
- Teachers do not expect pupils to follow the school's policy for handwriting and presentation during lessons in the afternoon. This reduces the quality of pupils' work and their learning.
- Leaders have not ensured that there is a wide range of resources to support pupils' learning in science or mathematics.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have ensured that a broad range of independent careers advice exists for pupils. This helps them to make and achieve informed choices about their future education, training and employment.
- Pupils make good progress in their creative writing. They get off to a rapid start in their phonics and can therefore read with confidence.
- Pupils' personal development is good. Leaders have successfully threaded British values, debating skills and equality throughout the school's curriculum. This has a strong impact on pupils' learning and their preparation for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils are highly respectful. Their behaviour in lessons makes a strong contribution to their ability to learn. Pupils socialise and care for each other, from the youngest to the oldest pupils.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and association requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise further pupils' outcomes in mathematics, science and art by ensuring that:
  - pupils regularly use their good writing skills to develop their thinking, particularly in mathematics and science
  - teachers expect pupils to present their learning and handwriting consistently in line with the school's own policies and expectations
  - teachers help pupils to consider more deeply their mathematical calculations and why they have used particular methods to get their answers
  - pupils can access a wide range of practical science equipment and, in line with the school's curriculum, plan, conduct and write about scientific experiments
  - lower-ability pupils, particularly those in primary-aged classes, can access appropriate mathematics resources to support them conduct calculations
  - pupils' art work is evidenced well to demonstrate their learning over time.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
  - leaders fully understand all the independent school standards, so they are met consistently
  - evaluations of the school's effectiveness are used to develop and refine the school's plans for improving teaching, the curriculum and pupils' academic outcomes
  - the proprietor and governors challenge more sharply the impact leaders' actions have on improving and maintaining the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

### The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that teaching across the school utilises effectively classroom resources of good quality, quantity and range (paragraph 3 and 3(f)).
- The proprietor must ensure that they comply with the standard about the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, fulfilling their responsibilities effectively (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)).

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders have not maintained the good standard of education found at the previous inspection. Their plans to improve the school have become isolated from their largely accurate knowledge of the school's effectiveness. This has meant that leaders have not been quick enough to address emerging weaknesses in the school's curriculum, teaching or pupils' outcomes. Consequently, these aspects of the school's work now require improvement.
- Leaders had not ensured that all of the independent school standards were met at the time of this inspection. Trustees have not challenged leaders sufficiently about these important compliance standards. These unmet standards were largely administrative and addressed by the end of the inspection, for example labelling drinking water and providing ready access to prescribed policies. Unmet standards remain as the school has limited resources to teach the school's science curriculum.
- Since the previous inspection, improvement plans are focused more sharply on pupils' learning. However, these are not updated during the academic year when evaluating pupils' outcomes, the quality of teaching, pupils' or parental feedback. Consequently, areas that have required improvement have not been resolutely tackled, for example pupils' inconsistent application of the school's handwriting and presentation policy. This exemplifies leaders not linking their ongoing work to evaluate the school's curriculum and teaching to their plans for improvement.
- Careers guidance and support is a strength of the school's work. Pupils benefit from independent workshops that help them develop ideas about academic and work-related routes through education. This helps pupils make informed decisions about sixth-form courses, for example staying at the school to study the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE) or moving to a further education college to study A levels. Work placements further help pupils test out their thinking about careers. The school is beginning to integrate careers into their afternoon lessons, enabling pupils to learn about careers and the labour market while studying. However, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these strategies, particularly in relation to science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is developed well. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to learn about other world religions and belief systems such as atheism and humanism. These beliefs are well understood by pupils, who show a genuine compassion and respect for people. Pupils show compassion and care for those in the world around them, such as refugees and those struggling with social issues such as poverty.
- Staff have promoted equality and pupils' understanding of this as a concept effectively. Pupils, regardless of their age, have a good understanding of equality and upholding this value in everyday life. Pupils can talk about characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. With increasing sophistication, they can talk about how people may be different to them, but reject discrimination in all its forms, regardless of faith, race, gender, disability, age or sexuality. This understanding of equality enhances pupils' understanding of British values and their readiness for their next stage of education, training or

employment in modern Britain.

## **Governance**

- The proprietor and governors have not been rigorous enough in holding leaders to account for the school's performance. Consequently, they have not ensured that leaders have consistently met all the independent school standards and maintained the school's previously good standard of education.
- Over the last year, governors have recognised the need to increase the rigour of their challenge. As a result, there have been tangible improvements in the school's afternoon curriculum, for example in creative writing and careers guidance for secondary pupils. Governors recognise the need to maintain this rigorous challenge and apply these skills to all areas of their work.
- Governors visit often to review the school's work. Parents and carers and pupils alike know them and feel they can give feedback on their views when necessary. These visits are playing an important part in helping governors provide challenge for improvement. For example, during a visit on the first day of this inspection the chair of the governing body challenged leaders to improve the quality of teaching in science.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and it meets current government requirements. The proprietor and leaders have established a culture where safeguarding is understood by everyone in the school. Pupils and staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and how to raise problems with the school, if they arise.
- Staff receive regular training, which helps them understand the symptoms of potential abuse or neglect, and how to respond when they identify issues. When safeguarding concerns arise, staff maintain appropriate records which are well managed. Leaders work effectively with external agencies and are committed to overcoming risks they know exist in the local community, for example gangs and knife crime.
- Leaders have adapted their afternoon curriculum to support pupils in understanding how to stay safe from potential risks, particularly those that are more prevalent in their local community. Consequently, pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe in school, in their community and when using electronic devices.

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

## **Requires improvement**

- Teachers provide pupils with few opportunities to use their good writing skills in subjects other than English. As a result, this slows pupils' progress in other subjects, especially in mathematics and science. Pupils are not always able to demonstrate the depth of their understanding or explore their thinking to enable them to achieve well.
- Teachers provide few opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical thinking orally or in writing. This prevents pupils from making the progress they are capable of and places them at a disadvantage should they wish to study A-level science, engineering, mathematics or technology at a sixth-form college. Nevertheless, teachers have ensured that pupils are given a range of activities that enable pupils to develop their

calculation and problem-solving skills. Teachers skilfully help pupils overcome misconceptions and errors before moving them on in their learning.

- Lower-ability pupils are supported well in most classrooms. However, the school provides few resources to support these pupils while studying primary mathematics; for example, number lines, squares or blocks.
- Teachers ensure that pupils consistently use the school's cursive handwriting system during their morning work. However, during afternoon activities pupils' presentation and handwriting is allowed to drift from these high expectations.
- Pupils benefit from good phonics teaching. Staff have secure subject knowledge and consistently demonstrate the sounds letters make. Pupils quickly learn their initial sounds and confidently blend and segment letter formations.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Teachers ensure that pupils develop increasingly effective reading comprehension strategies over time. Teachers unpick pupils' thinking and help them overcome difficulties. Pupils increasingly develop clear opinions about their favourite books and authors.
- Creative writing is taught well, drawing on pupils' interests and skills. Pupils increasingly write with their audience in mind and draw on techniques used by professional authors, such as flashback and plot twists.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of what it means to be a British citizen. They understand concepts of democracy, liberty, respect and equality. Effective teaching has helped pupils develop valuable debating skills on important social issues such as poverty, money and the European Union. This life skill helps pupils to be comfortable and confident when talking both socially and formally.
- Pupils are self-confident and show resilience when they encounter difficulties in their learning. For example, when pupils identify errors in their learning they readily review their work and seek support from adults to help overcome their difficulties.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying in all its forms. They understand how to deal with bullying issues should they occur, including online cyber bullying.
- Pupils show empathy, particularly for those most in need or experiencing distress. For example, pupils recently asked to complete a 'rickshaw challenge' for charity, cycling 47 miles, roughly two miles each. Pupils are passionate about the difference their charity work makes to the lives of those that they help.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils socialise happily and care for each other across the full age range of the school. One pupil summed up the views of many when she said, 'We are a family here. Everyone

knows each other and cares for each other.’ A member of staff explained, ‘it is like a village situated right in London.’

- Pupils’ behaviour in lessons and over time is good. There is rarely any off-task behaviour and pupils’ strong work ethic plays an important role in their academic learning. Misbehaviour over time is rare and dealt with quickly by staff. Records show staff work well with parents to quickly overcome any behaviour issues or concerns.
- Pupils take responsibility for organising themselves and getting ready for their learning activities. Bullying and misbehaviour is rare. However, pupils on occasion do require reminders about expectations when moving around the school building and during social times.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They attend regularly and on time, ensuring they can make the most of term-time learning.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- The school has a small number of pupils. Therefore, analysis of groups or trends are potentially unreliable. However, pupils’ work, their feedback and evidence from the school show that pupils’ academic progress overall requires improvement, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Pupils’ attainment in art is broadly in line with national expectations for their individual ages. They use a variety of media and materials and develop a range of skills, such as sketching, shading, painting and sculpting. However, pupils make slower progress in art than they should because they do not have a bank of experiences to refer to or an overview of their art work over time. This also limits leaders’ ability to assess the impact of teaching over time on pupils’ outcomes.
- Pupils’ attainment in science is inconsistent. Teaching helps pupils develop a good level of knowledge and understanding about the current established facts in science. However, pupils make slow progress in developing practical science skills. This holds back pupils in being able to plan, deliver, experiment and write about their own scientific investigations.
- All pupils make consistently strong progress in creative writing. They are enthusiastic writers and enjoy applying their learning about books in their own work.
- Pupils begin the school with little or no experience of phonics. Teachers quickly develop pupils’ understanding of letter sounds through games, songs and learning activities. Pupils are taught to use phonic skills to read and learn new words. This progressive teaching quickly helps pupils to enjoy reading and expand their vocabulary. Consistent and well-modelled phonics teaching helps pupils get off to a good start and catch up with national expectations for Year 1 pupils.
- Pupils read often and review books regularly for their peers. This leads to pupils happily debating their reading preferences with each other and making informed recommendations about books their friends should try.

## School details

Unique reference number	134580
DfE registration number	308/6068
Inspection number	10038169

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	N.L.M Trust
Chair	Gareth Hawkes
Headteacher	Paul Kelly
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,940
Telephone number	020 8887 6888
Website	<a href="http://www.phoenixacademy.co.uk">www.phoenixacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@phoenixacademy.co.uk">info@phoenixacademy.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	4–6 November 2014

## Information about this school

- This is an all-through school, which educates pupils from Year 1 upwards. Few pupils have attended early years Reception classes prior to attending the school. A few pupils were home schooled prior to joining the school.
- The school was last inspected in November 2014, when it was judged to be good.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision or any off-site training.
- There are no pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, a statement of special educational needs, or an education, health and care plan.

- The school is a Christian faith school and is part of the Christian Education Europe network of schools. The school follows the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum most mornings. Pupils follow the school's own curriculum in the afternoon, learning art; music; physical education; debating; personal, social, health and economic education; Spanish and computer programming.
- At the time of the inspection, two students were attending the school's 16 to 19 study programme, which leads to an advanced ICCE. There were therefore too few students to report explicitly on the sixth-form 16 to 19 programme without identifying individuals.



## Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed pupils' learning in the morning ACE sessions. He observed supervisors working with pupils and discussing their learning assessments. The inspector observed learning in the afternoon curriculum, and visited senior pupils being taught physical education at a local athletics stadium.
- The inspector listened to pupils read. He met many pupils both formally and informally to discuss their learning, safety and views about the school. The inspector examined a wide range of work across subjects.
- The inspector examined a wide range of documentary evidence, including the school's website, policies, records relating to safer recruitment of staff, schemes of work and plans for learning. He scrutinised records of staff training, leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness and plans for improvement, safeguarding and behaviour records, stakeholder surveys, pupils' outcomes and the school reports to parents. He examined health and safety information relating to the independent school standards for fire safety, premises, and first aid.
- The inspector held a telephone call with a former sixth-form student.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and all members of the governing body, including the chair, as well as members of the teaching and support staff.

## Inspection team

David Storrie, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
M1 2WD

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