

# Phoenix U16 Independent School

Unit E, Metro Business Park, Clough Street, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire ST1 4AF

## Inspection dates

23–25 January 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders and staff work together as a highly effective team. They are ambitious and share a clear vision. They are aspirational and have high expectations for their pupils.
- The school is very effective at achieving its aim of developing pupils' self-esteem and ensuring that they make good academic progress. This has ensured that the vast majority of pupils leave the school ready to enter further education or training.
- The school meets all of the independent school standards.
- The school works very effectively with a range of agencies and professionals to ensure that pupils are well cared for, supported and safe.
- Teachers use the school's assessment system well to ensure that teaching and learning is well matched to individual pupil's learning needs.
- Behaviour is well managed. The behaviour of many pupils has improved significantly over time. The small teaching groups ensures that most lessons run smoothly and pupils are well supported to make good gains in their learning.
- Good attendance is promoted and rewarded. Consequently, pupils' attendance is improving over time and the number of pupils who attend regularly and punctually is increasing. However, attendance for some pupils remains too low.
- Pupils are not always given enough time in lessons to reflect on their learning and practise new skills.
- Pupils do not always work with the same consistently high standards across all curriculum areas.
- Leaders do not always make the best use of the information they gather about the school's performance.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management by:
  - identifying ways of improving attendance further so that more pupils' attendance is in line with national averages
  - ensuring that the wealth of information available is analysed accurately and promptly to ensure that the impact of improvement priorities can be measured against improvements in pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - sufficient time is provided in lessons for pupils to reflect on their learning, deepen their understanding and practise new skills independently and at their own pace
  - when pupils are applying their mathematical and language skills across the curriculum, they are meeting the same consistently high standards in all subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Staff at all levels have the highest aspirations for pupils' outcomes and work hard as an effective team to ensure that the school achieves its aim to provide pupils with the knowledge and skills that they can use now and in later life.
- The continuing professional development of staff is a priority. All teachers have either completed teaching qualifications or are working towards completing them. Leaders use the information they gather very well to identify appropriate training and support for teachers. This has strengthened the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders have established a robust system of staff appraisal which is linked to the school improvement priorities and outcomes for pupils. Teachers greatly value the support and opportunities they are provided with.
- The headteacher has ensured that an effective system of monitoring the performance of the school has been established. This includes monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, behaviour, attendance, academic outcomes and safeguarding. Consequently, leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development and are able to identify appropriate improvement priorities to ensure that the school continues to improve. Leaders now need to ensure that they use the information available to them to monitor the impact of their actions more closely and ensure that improvement priorities are targeted and precise.
- Leaders and teachers have created an appropriate environment to ensure that the wide-ranging social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils are met. They have rightly focused on re-engaging pupils with learning and developing their personal and social skills. This has been highly successful and all pupils have improved their behaviour and attendance since being at Phoenix. However, attendance for a number of pupils is still too low and the headteacher is exploring ways that this can be improved.
- Leaders and teachers have worked together to devise a broad and engaging curriculum which meets all the requirements of the independent school standards and is well matched to the needs of the pupils. Pupils are offered a wide range of experiences and are able to acquire knowledge and develop skills in a range of subjects. They can complete accredited GCSE and BTEC qualifications in English, mathematics, biology, health and social care, business studies and sport as well as developing their creative and artistic skills through the wider curriculum.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is given high priority. Through the school's comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education programme pupils learn about British values such as democracy, equality, rule of law and tolerance. They demonstrate respect for others' beliefs and values and for different religions and cultures. They engage in activities to support their local community, including supporting the local food bank and holding fundraising events to raise money for local and national charities. For example, pupils regularly host a community coffee morning to raise funds for the Douglas Macmillan Hospice.
- The opportunities provided to pupils help them to develop their interpersonal skills, make

good academic progress and prepare them well for life beyond school.

## **Governance**

- Governance is provided by the local authority through a team of mentors who regularly visit the school to oversee aspects of the school's work, including the academic progress made by pupils, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The headteacher of the school also works closely with a group of headteachers from local schools who challenge and support each other.
- The local authority provides funds for many of the pupils at the school and as such recognises the need to provide greater levels of challenge and support and is looking at ways that this can be achieved.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Adults in school have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures, the most recent guidance for keeping children safe and the potential risks faced by many pupils.
- The school's work with a wide range of professionals is highly effective in ensuring that vulnerable pupils and their families are very well supported and cared for.
- The records held by the school are appropriately detailed and well maintained.
- The headteacher and two other members of staff have carried out safer recruitment training. All the required checks on staff's suitability to work with children have been carried out.
- The school has ensured that pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet. Pupils are safe and say that they feel safe and well cared for in school. They have a good understanding about a range of different types of bullying. They are confident in saying that there is no bullying in school and they know what to do should it happen. Pupils could talk confidently about the importance of making healthy life choices.
- The school's safeguarding policy meets current government requirements regarding safeguarding. It is fully implemented and available to parents and carers on the school website.
- The school implements its range of safeguarding policies effectively including health and safety, anti-bullying, behaviour management, risk assessment and safer recruitment.

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

**Good**

- The headteacher leads by example and has ensured that the teaching staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to teach the curriculum effectively. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to deepen pupils' understanding.
- Teachers plan well-structured lessons. They use a range of activities to support learning, resulting in a high level of engagement from pupils.

- Teachers know the pupils well and have a good understanding of their individual learning needs. Consequently, learning and activities are well matched to the needs of pupils and appropriate levels of challenge and support are provided.
- Questioning is used well by teachers in lessons to probe pupils' understanding and reshape learning where necessary. The learning intention for the lesson is clear and teachers provide clear explanations.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and make a positive contribution to the progress made by pupils in lessons. Pupils are confident to contribute during activities and to ask for support when they find something difficult.
- Leaders have developed an effective framework for assessment which enables them to monitor the progress of individual pupils. It also informs teachers' planning by highlighting gaps in pupils' knowledge. Evidence from these assessments and the work in pupils' books shows that over time, pupils make strong progress from their low starting points.
- Teachers make consistent, effective use of the school's behaviour management systems during lessons to ensure that inappropriate behaviour does not become a barrier to learning. This includes the awarding of points for demonstrating appropriate learning behaviours. The pupils value this and respond positively to the strategies.
- Opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning during lessons are provided. However, these could be used more consistently and effectively to deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding and independent learning skills further. For example, they could allow more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills independently of adult support, develop greater resilience and think for themselves.
- Pupils generally take pride in their work and it is well presented. However, sometimes the standard in presentation varies across different subjects. Teachers need to ensure that they have the same consistently high expectations across all subjects so that the quality of pupils' work is consistently high across the curriculum.
- The school provides frequent, detailed information to parents, the local authority and referring schools about individual pupil's progress, learning and behaviour.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The high-quality pastoral support pupils receive ensures that all pupils make great strides in their personal development, restoring and improving their self-confidence and self-respect.
- The exemplary support provided by the school for pupils facing challenging circumstances is highly effective. This includes its work with a wide range of professionals and its support for families.
- Pupils are confident and self-assured and are proud of their achievements. They recognise the difference the school has made to their lives and their opportunities for the future. All members of staff act as positive role models. They treat pupils with respect and courtesy at all times. Pupils value this and in return demonstrate respect for all adults.

- Pupils show respect for the views of others and listen carefully to staff and each other.
- Pupils' emotional well-being is given high priority by adults in school. Adults know the pupils very well and as a result are able to provide timely, appropriate emotional support, where needed. Because of this, pupils feel safe and potential barriers to learning are reduced.
- The school's 'attitude to learning' programme has been highly effective in developing pupils' awareness of themselves as successful learners. Pupils use this system well to self-manage their behaviour and increasingly meet the high standards of behaviour that teachers have for them.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Promoting regular attendance and punctuality is a priority of the school. Overall attendance is improving as a result of the actions taken by the school and currently stands at 86%. Although below national expectations, this figure represents a marked improvement in attendance for almost all pupils. Leaders are continuing to develop ways to improve attendance further.
- The school's behaviour management systems are clear, understood by all and consistently applied by all adults, who routinely challenge inappropriate behaviour. This has resulted in significant improvements in pupils' behaviour during their time at Phoenix.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. Behaviour logs show that inappropriate behaviour is quickly and effectively responded to.
- Almost all pupils who attend Phoenix School have a history of fixed-term exclusions in their previous setting due to inappropriate behaviour. The improved conduct and academic progress made by the pupils therefore demonstrates a significant improvement which is a direct result of the actions taken by leaders and adults in this setting.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- When pupils arrive at the school, they have significant gaps in their learning, largely due to previous significant interruptions to their education. They also have largely negative attitudes to learning. Consequently, the improvements in attendance, behaviour and academic progress made by the majority of pupils during their time at Phoenix School is significant.
- The school's assessment information shows that in 2017 pupils in Year 11 made accelerated progress in English and mathematics from their start point on entry to the school. One hundred per cent of pupils in this year group achieved at least one accredited qualification by the end of Year 11.
- Work in pupils' books and school assessment information for current pupils show that the majority of pupils are making strong progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress across the wider curriculum, acquiring new knowledge and skills and discovering how they can become more effective, successful learners. The qualifications and subjects offered to pupils ensure that they develop a wide range of

appropriate skills.

- High-quality careers information and guidance ensures that pupils have sufficient information to enable them to complete the required qualifications to pursue their chosen career paths. This careers information combined with the strong academic progress made by pupils ensures that they leave school well equipped to continue their education or training.
- The school is successful in achieving its aims to turn young people's lives around and enable them to become successful members of society.

## School details

Unique reference number	137892
DfE registration number	861/6007
Inspection number	10026111

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	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Number of part-time pupils	7
Proprietor	Mrs Shelley Jamieson
Headteacher	Mrs Shelley Jamieson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,600
Telephone number	01782 922306
Website	<a href="http://www.phoenixlearning.co.uk">www.phoenixlearning.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:sjamieson@phoenixlearning.co.uk">sjamieson@phoenixlearning.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	20–21 March 2013

## Information about this school

- Phoenix U16 School provides full and part-time education for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 and is registered by the Department for Education (DfE) to accommodate up to 25 pupils on a full-time basis. Twenty pupils currently attend the school full time, with seven pupils attending on a part-time basis. Eight pupils are dual-registered with other education providers. The local authority retains the statutory responsibility to ensure that pupils receive full-time education and their full entitlement to the curriculum.
- The school operates from a converted warehouse unit on a business park in the Hanley area of Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire.
- Pupils are referred to the school by local secondary schools or the local authority.
- Pupils attending Phoenix U16 typically have a range of social, emotional and behavioural



difficulties and have either been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from their previous setting.

- The school aims to address the individual social, emotional and learning needs of its young people by developing their self-esteem and teaching them to make appropriate choices to enable them to continue on into further education, training and employment.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school was first registered by the DfE in January 2012.
- It was last inspected in March 2013.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by one inspector over three days.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the curriculum and looked at pupils' work in English and mathematics. The observations were carried out jointly with the school's headteacher.
- The inspector looked at the school's own assessment information for individual pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the school's designated safeguarding lead, the attendance lead and a representative from the local authority. The inspector also spoke with a group of pupils.
- Questionnaires submitted by seven members of staff were scrutinised.
- The views of parents were gathered from discussions with three parents and one response to Ofsted's Parent View survey.
- A wide range of documents and policies were looked at, including health and safety checks, records of observations of teaching, school self-evaluation and improvement plans, safeguarding documentation and records of attendance.
- A check of the premises, including the facilities provided for pupils, was also carried out.

## Inspection team

Janet Satchwell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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