

# Physis Heathgates Academy

PO Box 179, Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 9DE

**Inspection date** 2 November 2015

**Overall outcome** **Independent school standards met**

## Context of the inspection

- A material change visit took place in November 2014 when a very large number of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 were unmet.
- The academy submitted an action plan outlining its proposals to address these failings. This was evaluated in January 2015 and found to require improvement.
- A progress monitoring visit to assess the academy's progress in implementing its action plan was made in April 2015. At this time some, but not all, of the regulations were met. The academy submitted a revised action plan to address these, which was evaluated and judged to be satisfactory in July 2015.
- This unannounced second progress monitoring inspection visit was made at the request of the Department for Education to assess the progress made by the academy against its action plan and in complying with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements.

## Main findings

- This second progress monitoring inspection visit focused on regulations relating to the curriculum and teaching (Part 1 of the independent school standards), the provision of information (Part 6) and the leadership and management (Part 8) that remained unmet at the time of the first progress monitoring visit in April 2015. The academy's website was also accessed to check that the safeguarding policy reflected the most recent statutory requirements.

## Curriculum

- The progress monitoring inspection in April 2015 found that curriculum planning, while much improved since the inspection in November 2014, remained inconsistent across key stages and subjects. There were examples of effective planning in English and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) but planning was weaker in religious education, science, and design and technology (D&T). The academy prepared an action plan to address these weaknesses. When this was evaluated by Ofsted in July 2015, the proposals and timescale were judged to be satisfactory.
- This second progress monitoring inspection visit found that the academy has successfully implemented its proposals to revise its curriculum policy and develop schemes of work and teaching plans. A planning template has been devised with staff; this identifies cross-curricular links, such as those to literacy and numeracy. It guides teachers to consider what pupils need to learn, know and do, the resources needed and how pupils' progress will be regularly assessed.
- The improved medium-term planning document has been in operation since the beginning of June 2015. It was evaluated by senior leaders in August 2015 and amendments and improvements have been made. Discussion with the headteacher and scrutiny of planning files on this visit show this to be working well.

- The academy's schemes and plans for science, mathematics, religious education, and design and technology have been developed. They now provide effective coverage of these subjects and are well adapted to meet the needs of pupils in both key stages. All pupils are given teacher-assessed levels at each professional development day; testing takes place every four months.
- Senior leaders are checking all medium-term planning, with weekly checks of the work completed by pupils. Short-term planning is included on each scheme of work by teachers, enabling an audit trail to be followed.
- Senior leaders' evaluation in August 2015 found the quality of planning varied; this was made the focus of the professional training day at the beginning of September 2015. Scrutiny during this inspection visit shows that the high-quality planning already established has been maintained and that there have been improvements where planning was previously less successful.
- The academy's senior leaders are effectively monitoring the implementation of their action plan proposals. This process has been strengthened by the involvement of an external educational consultant.
- Evidence from scrutiny, observations and discussions shows that the academy has made good progress in implementing and evaluating the action plan proposals.

### Teaching and assessment

- The progress monitoring inspection in April 2015 found that, although there was an assessment framework with the introduction of appropriate baseline assessment of pupils' skills on entry to the academy, not all teachers used this information consistently to plan appropriate work. Targets were set and linked to behaviour, individual education plans and education, health and care plans, but the work provided was not at the correct level to enable pupils to meet their targets, in all subjects. Teaching did not sufficiently extend the skills of those pupils who are capable of reaching the higher levels. This was because the work set was too easy or progression was not planned for sufficiently.
- The inspection in April 2015 also found that teachers did not mark pupils' work often or well enough to enable them to make progress or improve it. Marking remained poor overall in spite of some good examples in PSHE and English. Pupils' work had not been marked for some time in several subjects. Teachers did not insist that all work, including homework, was completed. While the academy had identified gaps in pupils' learning, planned activities were not suitable to give pupils sufficient opportunities to help them overcome their previous difficulties.
- The academy leaders drew up an action plan to address these shortcomings. These proposals, together with the timescale for implementing them, were evaluated and accepted by Ofsted in July 2015.
- This second progress monitoring inspection visit found that the academy's leaders have successfully implemented the proposals in the action plan, and are actively monitoring and evaluating the plan's implementation.
- There are now six classrooms at Heathgates. The Retreat is used for specialised teaching in science and D&T (food technology, and hospitality and catering). The academy now has seven pupils. All are taught one-to-one by subject specialists unless small-group teaching is considered appropriate to the development and needs of the pupils. Supported by an external consultant, senior leaders have implemented the action plan proposals to monitor teaching and learning closely. Records show that pupils are making progress from their starting point and over time.
- Many pupils come from an extremely disrupted educational background and are operating well below their chronological age. There is a good focus on developing their skills and knowledge to the desired levels.
- All individual education plans, personal education plans, children who are looked after reviews and statements or education, health and care plans are completed in liaison with placing authorities. These focus on priorities for learning to enable pupils to achieve accreditation and access the next stage in their education.
- Senior leaders have daily discussions about what they observe. They monitor pupils' learning

and progress through weekly book checks and observations. Conversations between teachers and pupils are regularly recorded in work books. Information about pupils' achievements and next steps is included in daily staff liaison reports.

- Teachers' planning is adapted based on the marking of previous work and the level of engagement of pupils during lessons. Pupils' work, showing the development of learning and pupil progress, is monitored regularly. This is discussed with senior leaders, staff and therapists during meetings.
- Short-term plans show that a variety of teaching methods are being used. The headteacher encourages teachers to adapt teaching and learning strategies to engage pupils. Regular observations of teaching are taking place and these are used to support teachers in finding the right approach for each pupil. Written reports of observations by senior leaders and peer observations are produced and provided to teachers.
- A good improvement in marking technique is evident from the scrutiny of pupils' work. This confirms senior leaders' evaluation. In the August 2015 review, the headteacher rightly identified that more conversational marking, where teachers discuss pupils' work with them and focus on how it can be improved, was required. This has been developed during the current semester. One pupil said that this approach was really helping her to move on with her learning.
- Teachers are making positive efforts to ensure that pupils complete all their work. Senior leaders and staff are aware of the challenge this poses for some pupils. Nonetheless, they are persevering with finding different ways of increasing the quality and quantity of pupils' work. Scrutiny of work books shows that pupils are gaining ground. Even the most reluctant learner is producing more work. Senior leaders have identified that this has been helped by teachers using different methods and being more flexible in their approach to accommodating pupils' different and preferred learning styles.
- Target levels for individual pupils are reviewed regularly and adjusted to take account of levels of engagement. As a result, expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised.
- Evidence from scrutiny, observations and discussions show that the academy has made good progress in implementing and evaluating the action plan proposals.

### **Provision of information**

- The first progress monitoring inspection in April 2015 found that the academy's leaders continued not to provide local authorities, and where requested the Secretary of State, with an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred. The academy drew up an action plan to address this, which was evaluated and accepted by Ofsted in July 2015. The timescale was also evaluated and judged to be satisfactory.
- During this second progress monitoring inspection visit, the headteacher provided a copy of a financial statement sent in June 2015 to a local authority for pupils it places at the academy. This shows the required information. The headteacher and finance director are responsible for ensuring local authorities receive the statement. They report this to the yearly board meeting.
- The evidence seen indicates that the academy has made good progress in implementing and evaluating its action plan proposals.

### **Leadership and management**

- The progress monitoring inspection in April 2015 found that, while they had made good progress in tackling the majority of weaknesses that led to the failures, leaders still did not fulfil their responsibilities effectively. This was because they did not keep a careful enough check on the work of teachers or make sure that pupils were given the right work at the correct level during lessons and for homework. Leaders did not check that teachers are following the academy policy on marking pupils' work.
- The academy's leaders drew up proposals to address these shortcomings. The action plan was evaluated and accepted by Ofsted in July 2015. The action plan evaluation found that the proposals were appropriate and clearly related to the failed regulation. The timescale was also judged to be satisfactory. For example, the action plan stated that an external leadership consultant would be engaged to provide ongoing advice and guidance for academy leaders, that

leaders would access appropriate courses, and that the headteacher would update his knowledge and understanding of the independent school regulations. The action plan identified resources that are aligned against the actions.

- This second progress monitoring visit found that the academy leaders have received training and are now aware of the independent school regulations. They have benefited from the guidance of an experienced educational consultant in drawing up and implementing their plans for improvement.
- The proposal for the headteacher to network with other headteachers has not progressed as rapidly as planned. The proprietor is seeking to improve the support and challenge for the headteacher with the appointment of an additional experienced practitioner to join the senior leadership team.
- The headteacher provides the proprietor with regular written updates about pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the progress being made in implementing the academy's action plan.
- Senior leaders have recently updated the academy's safeguarding policy to reflect the latest requirements outlined in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (July 2015). The revised policy is available to parents, carers and others on the academy's website.
- The academy has made good progress in implementing its action plan proposals in order to meet all the requirements of the independent school regulations.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

**The school meets the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements**

## Inspection team

Michael Best, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

## Information about this school

- Physis Heathgates Academy is situated in a rural location near Whitchurch, Shropshire. Additional teaching accommodation at The Retreat is about 10 miles away.
- The academy is registered for up to 11 pupils, aged 10 to 18 years who have emotional and social difficulties. There are currently seven pupils from Key Stages 3 and 4 on roll.
- The academy opened in August 2012 and had its first inspection on 23 July 2013, when it was judged to be adequate. It extended its provision in 2014 to include a separate off-site teaching facility, based at The Retreat.
- Twelve subject-specialist teachers teach the pupils each week.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138580
<b>Inspection number</b>	10007062
<b>DfE registration number</b>	893/6029
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for pupils with emotional and social difficulties
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Female
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	7
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Physis Group
<b>Chair</b>	Clifton Supple
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andy Plant
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 April 2015
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£59,800
<b>Telephone number</b>	01948 841260
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:aplant@physisgroup.co.uk">aplant@physisgroup.co.uk</a>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our website for news, information and updates at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/user>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2015