

The Phoenix Collegiate

Clarkes Lane, West Bromwich, West Midlands B71 2BX

Inspection dates

14–15 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Progress and attainment at GCSE, while improving slowly, have been significantly below national averages for the past two years. This is because teachers' expectations are not high enough for some pupils.
- While there is some strong teaching, it is not yet good across the school. Changes to teaching introduced by leaders have not improved pupils' final outcomes because not all teachers apply them.
- In some lessons, teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient challenge to make progress in their learning.
- The quality of learning and assessment is stronger at GCSE than it is at key stage 3.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress has been weak for the past three years. Current progress for these pupils is improving but only marginally.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has been significantly below the national average at GCSE for the past three years. Better leadership and increased staffing are leading to some improvement, but it is very early days.
- The academic curriculum has not been strong enough over time. Until this year, too few pupils have chosen to study modern foreign languages at GCSE.
- Leaders' planning, while it is now better, lacks precision. They have introduced too many initiatives and made insufficient evaluation of their impact on pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, with the support of governors and the local authority, has created a strong culture of opportunity, respect and tolerance. Pupils and staff are proud of the school and ambitious for further improvement.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming. They speak highly of the support they receive.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and this has led to a dramatic fall in the number of exclusions this academic year. Pupils' enjoyment of school is shown by high attendance rates over time.
- The sixth form is good. Leadership is effective, and there is some high-quality specialist teaching.
- The performance of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very strong.
- Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to take part in extra-curricular activities.
- Safeguarding has the highest priority. Pupils, without exception, say they feel safe at school and know there are staff available to support them.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and plan activities to challenge all pupils
 - teachers consistently apply leaders' strategies to improve pupils' learning, especially at key stage 3.

- Improve outcomes in mathematics by:
 - reducing the variability in the quality of teaching
 - sharing the effective practice in teaching that is developing across the school.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management further by ensuring that:
 - the remaining achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are narrowed
 - monitoring systems are sharp and enable leaders at all levels to evaluate which strategies are the most effective and why.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has established an ambitious vision for the school since taking up his post in January 2018. With the support of governors, school leaders, and the local authority, he has raised expectations. At the same time, leaders ensure that staff morale is high. The majority of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire said that they are proud to work in the school and think that the school is improving.
- Pupils say the school is improving.
- Leaders, including governors, are increasingly successful in engaging parents and building relationships with the community.
- The headteacher has improved the quality of senior and middle leadership and there is greater accountability at all levels. The school's leadership has the capacity to make further improvements to pupils' outcomes.
- Procedures for managing teachers' performance are rigorous. Teachers' targets are linked closely to the school's priorities and pupils' outcomes.
- Subject leaders are held to account for the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in their departments. They monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work. However, the impact of this practice on pupils' progress is not yet good enough across all departments.
- Leaders know where strong teaching practice exists in the school. Although good and outstanding practitioners are used to develop the skills of others, this work needs further development.
- Newly qualified teachers value the wide range of professional training and support that they receive. More experienced teachers also appreciate the professional development opportunities offered.
- Some teachers do not adhere to leaders' expectations and their pupils receive insufficient challenge in their learning. This is partly because leaders have introduced too many initiatives to improve teaching which are neither sharply planned nor evaluated.
- The extra funding the school receives for disadvantaged pupils and to support some Year 7 pupils with low prior attainment is not used effectively.
- While leaders have identified the barriers to improvements in the progress of disadvantaged pupils, the actions that they have taken to narrow the achievement gaps between these pupils and others nationally have not been successful. Leaders have not streamlined and evaluated the effectiveness of their actions with enough precision.
- Inspectors saw effective support for those Year 7 pupils who need additional literacy and numeracy intervention. However, leaders could not provide updated evidence of

these pupils' progress.

- Leaders are revising how they check on the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in order to make better use of additional funding. While the welfare of pupils with SEND is well supported, too many make slow progress with their learning. The special educational needs department is not using relevant information to evaluate the impact of support programmes on pupils' academic progress.
- The curriculum is now broad and balanced, with a focus on academic subjects. There is an ambition to increase the number of pupils taking a modern foreign language and current numbers doing so at GCSE are higher than previously. Leaders are also developing more vocational options for pupils.
- A wide range of enrichment opportunities enhance the curriculum. These include a combined cadet force, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, drama productions, sport and educational visits. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said how much they valued these opportunities.
- Parents' views of the school are mainly positive. The majority of those completing Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to others. Additional comments received from parents reflected how much they value the support that their children receive.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed, knowledgeable and ambitious for higher standards.
- Governors have strengthened staffing and have a clear strategy to deal with financial challenges, including looking at the cost effectiveness of the sixth form.
- Together with leaders, governors have overseen extensive building work and marked improvements to the school environment.
- Governors have appointed new members to the board with educational experience. These governors complement the finance and business expertise already in place.
- Governors know that the quality of teaching and outcomes, especially for vulnerable groups, needs to improve.
- Governors want the school to address the needs of the local community and have increasingly engaged parents and carers to hear their ideas.
- Governors fulfil their legal responsibilities appropriately. They are suitably trained in safer recruitment and oversee the school's safeguarding processes effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong, watchful and proactive safeguarding culture. Pupils feel safe and they are safe.
- Inspectors probed about how leaders and teachers would identify whether pupils may have problems or concerns outside school. Processes and procedures for doing this and any required follow-up-work are appropriate.

- All statutory requirements are met. This includes up-to-date policies, and all staff receiving required training and reading part 1 of 'Keeping children safe in education'. These all ensure that pupils' welfare and safety are fostered well.
- Checks made on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people are thorough.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school is not good enough. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and there is too much inconsistency in how teachers apply leaders' strategies to improve teaching.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of areas of strength and those which require further development. While they have initiated a number of strategies to improve the quality of teaching, these have not yet resulted in good outcomes for pupils.
- Inspectors' observations and their scrutinies of pupils' books identified inconsistencies which match those identified by leaders.
- Teaching in mathematics is improving but is not yet good overall. Teachers do not build on the practice of effective teaching in the department and throughout the school. Younger pupils told inspectors too much of their work in mathematics repeats what they did at primary school. The quality of teaching at key stage 4 is stronger.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in science is variable. It is stronger at key stage 4. Inspection evidence gathered in key stage 3 shows inconsistencies between teachers.
- One of the whole-school strategies to improve teaching is to increase the amount of challenge given to pupils. Training has been targeted to support this area of teachers' work. The impact of this on pupils' progress is beginning to be seen, but many teachers continue to provide pupils with work that lacks challenge appropriate to their abilities.
- Leaders acknowledge that assessment data at key stage 3 is not as accurate as at key stage 4 and are beginning to take appropriate steps to change this.
- Where teaching is stronger, such as in English and humanities, teachers implement leaders' improvement strategies, including those for assessment. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, and pupils have confidence in them. Good relationships in lessons lead to a productive working environment.
- Teachers' feedback in many subject areas is effective in helping pupils improve their understanding.
- The most effective teaching is characterised by teachers making good use of time in lessons to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, this is not consistent practice across the school.
- Teaching in the sixth form is typically well planned in line with leaders' expectations. Students are enthusiastic in lessons and show clear understanding of where they are in their learning and what they must do to improve further.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Positive learning behaviours are observed in most cases. Pupils usually listen to teachers and support each other in class.
- Most pupils are confident and able to articulate their views on learning. This is more so at key stage 4 than key stage 3, where attitudes, while generally positive, are not as strong as those of older pupils.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They receive clear guidance on how to keep safe and healthy in lessons, such as science, in assemblies and through enrichment days.
- In discussions with inspectors, pupils said bullying at the school was infrequent. On the rare occasions it occurred, staff addressed it swiftly.
- Pupils appreciate the guidance they receive on careers education and choices post-16 and beyond.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for. They are given information and undertake activities to teach them about British values, the wider world and how to make a positive contribution to society. Pupils understand and appreciate cultural diversity. Pupils told inspectors they find 'enrichment' days' memorable. Topics covered include rights and responsibilities, democracy and raising pupils' awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Inspectors saw pupils working positively on the 'Phoenix Edge', an online tool through which they can gain accreditation for developing personal qualities.
- The minority of pupils who attend alternative provision are looked after well and follow an appropriate curriculum. Inspectors spoke directly with providers who confirmed leaders' views that communication is strong. This includes checks on pupils' attendance, welfare and progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils value their time at school. They have high levels of attendance and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is low.
- While over time exclusion rates at the school have been high, marked improvements in pupils' behaviour mean that exclusions have now reduced dramatically.
- Leaders' efforts to support good conduct have led to orderly movement around the school at lesson changeover and other times of the day.
- Pupils adhere to the school's uniform requirements. Their appearance is very smart across all year groups.
- Pupils are welcoming to visitors. They are respectful of each other and proud of their school. Older pupils told inspectors how much they appreciated the new school building and how it has contributed to better behaviour in lessons and at social times.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment when they join the school in Year 7 is well below the national average.
- Outcomes require improvement because pupils' progress is uneven across subjects and year groups and for different groups of pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress has been weak over time and, while improving slowly, remains poor.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is weak. Leaders are making changes, but there is much still to do.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not make good progress. Some teachers challenge pupils to achieve high grades, but this is not the case throughout the school.
- Progress for pupils with SEND was significantly below the national average in 2017 and 2018. Current pupils are beginning to make better progress, but it is uneven across subjects.
- The school's assessment information indicates that pupils' progress in key stage 3 is uneven across the curriculum. Inspection evidence confirms this.
- Pupils in Year 10 make better progress than others in the school. This is because of teaching meeting pupils' needs, and a greater focus on the knowledge, skills and understanding required for success at GCSE.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make strong progress. This has been the case over time. There is a very high proportion of these pupils in the school. They are well supported both pastorally and academically and achieve highly.
- Attainment for current pupils, including those gaining standard passes in English and mathematics, is rising but remains low. Although attainment has been weak over time, pupils do progress on to suitable pathways when they leave school. All pupils who left in 2018 are in education, employment or training.
- An increasing number of pupils now study a modern foreign language to GCSE level. Better teaching in this subject is leading to pupils making stronger progress at key stage 4.
- A minority of pupils who attend alternative provision follow a broad curriculum but do not make strong progress.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders in the sixth form have high expectations. There are secure systems in place and stronger self-evaluation systems than seen in the rest of the school.
- Following a fall in outcomes between 2017 and 2018, leaders took a number of effective actions to improve students' progress.
- A director of sixth form with responsibility for academic development was appointed in September 2018. He identified areas for improvement, including the quality of teaching and assessment in those subject areas in which outcomes had declined.
- Planned actions to bring about improvements in these areas have been carefully monitored. Inspection evidence from lesson observations, work scrutinies and discussions with students confirms that incremental improvements are being made.
- Retention levels in the sixth form are strong. All students who began A level and applied general courses in 2017 progressed to Year 13 in 2018. Current retention rates show a similar pattern.
- Students receive a range of impartial careers support and guidance. All those spoken to could explain how this prepares them well for the next stages in their education. Students are very positive about the help and support they get from their teachers.
- Students report feeling safe and happy. They feel confident that, should they require additional support, there are many adults at school to whom they could turn.
- There is a range of additional opportunities offered to students in the sixth form. These include visits to universities, talks from employers and involvement in the whole school, such as supporting younger pupils' reading. All students undertake work-experience placements which relate to an area of interest and possible future employment opportunities.
- During discussions with inspectors, students spoke about how they are taught to keep safe in the sixth form. They were particularly complimentary about enrichment days. Students explained how these provided useful and memorable information sessions on the dangers of alcohol and drugs, and how to keep safe in relationships.

School details

Unique reference number	136091
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10088606

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1762
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leigh Pepper
Headteacher	Michael Smith
Telephone number	01215888384
Website	www.aspirebelievesucceed.com
Email address	info@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2018

Information about this school

- Phoenix Collegiate is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The headteacher took up his post in January 2018.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is considerably above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is considerably above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND but who do not have an education, health and care plan is considerably higher than average.

- The school is in an area of high deprivation.
- Arrangements are in place for the school to use Albright Education Centre; Work and Learn; Sandwell Community School and Sandwell Valley School as alternative off-site provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons at key stage 3, key stage 4 and in the sixth form across a range of subjects. They also visited tutorial periods and attended a staff training session.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders and other staff. The lead inspector met with the vice chair of governors and they held a video conference with the chair of governors who was in Australia. The lead inspector also met with a local authority school improvement adviser who is providing support to the school.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, at break time, at lunchtime and at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and informally around the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, information on the attainment and progress of pupils, behaviour logs, attendance data and safeguarding information. Inspectors evaluated the school's pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding strategies. Inspectors also looked at the school's website.
- An inspector scrutinised the school's single central record.
- Inspectors considered the 28 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View and the 24 free-text responses from parents. They considered the 146 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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