

# The Phoenix Primary School

Leinster Road, Laindon, Basildon, Essex SS15 5NQ

## Inspection dates

10 to 11 July 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Outstanding</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Since becoming an academy in 2016, inspirational leadership from the headteacher and her deputy headteacher has transformed the quality of education provided for pupils.
- Their determination and ambition for pupils fosters a belief among staff that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds can achieve highly.
- Leaders at all levels and staff work cohesively as a team to provide pupils with a rich, stimulating environment in which to learn.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff go the extra mile to ensure that pupils overcome any barriers to their learning and make exceptional progress.
- Pupils' outcomes in reading, writing, mathematics and science are consistently high.
- Leaders use additional funding wisely to ensure that the outcomes achieved by disadvantaged pupils are equally high.
- All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and pupils who speak English as an additional language, achieve well.
- Pupils do not make the same progress in foundation subjects as they do in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Behaviour is exceptional. Pupils respond very well to the expectations of them. They thrive on the multiple rewards given out for good behaviour and positive attitudes.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is shown in their regular attendance. They enthuse about the range of after-school clubs, trips and activities provided for them.
- Children in Nursery and Reception classes get off to a great start. Leaders and staff ensure that children settle quickly, develop basic routines and learn to read from an early age.
- Phonics taught in Nursery provides a solid foundation for further learning. Staff ensure that most pupils can read well by the time they start Year 1.
- The academy trust provides exceptional support and challenge for senior leaders.
- Governors are knowledgeable and professional, and they ensure that all statutory duties are met.
- Parents and carers praise the quality of education, support and care provided by staff.
- Safeguarding is effective.

## **Full report**

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

- Ensure that work currently being done to develop the wider curriculum becomes firmly established and that teaching, learning and assessment in all foundation subjects enables pupils to make the same progress as they do in reading, writing, mathematics and science.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Since becoming an academy in 2016, the aspirational outlook and unswerving commitment of senior leaders to make improvements have turned the school into a beacon of success. Ineffective teaching has been challenged and expectations raised. Highly effective teaching ensures that the standards achieved by pupils are consistently high. Based on pupils' low starting points on entry, this represents exceptional progress. Clear expectations and consistent management of behaviour have led to a calm, purposeful environment for learning. Low attendance has been tackled and is now above average.
- This has been achieved through determined, unrelenting leadership from the headteacher and her deputy headteacher. They have engendered strong teamwork among staff and developed an ethos in which teachers plan collaboratively, learn from each other and take responsibility for school improvement. Together, senior and middle leaders, governors and the trust demonstrate exceptional capacity to improve further.
- A team of highly effective pastoral leaders demonstrates a thorough understanding of individual pupils, especially those who are known to be disadvantaged, vulnerable or have SEND. Their regular meetings and effective liaison with parents and carers ensure that they quickly follow up concerns and meet the needs of pupils. Good provision is made for a small minority of pupils who need additional nurture and care.
- Leaders ensure that they spend additional funding wisely. The impact of spending of the pupil premium is clearly evident in the consistent, strong progress made and the high attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Absence rates of disadvantaged pupils have improved significantly this year.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium is used effectively for suitably trained staff to provide competitive sport and raise the profile of PE in school. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said PE is one of their favourite lessons.
- Systematic monitoring by senior leaders provides them with an accurate overview of what the school does well and the areas that could be improved. Development plans are suitably prioritised and are used effectively to monitor the school's rate of improvement. Senior and middle leaders are held accountable. Teachers are encouraged to innovate and take risks and share their skills with others.
- Leaders have rightly focused on ensuring that pupils secure essential literacy and numeracy skills so that they are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education. Learning in some foundation subjects has, until recently, remained underdeveloped. New and experienced teachers have taken responsibility for improving this. The leader of humanities subjects is leading the way in developing suitable schemes of work and monitoring their implementation by teachers. Subject leaders are given time during the week to develop subject planning and assessment procedures and observe how effectively their subject is taught.
- Throughout the school's journey of improvement, leaders have ensured that pupils' needs have remained central and that 'children always come first'. They have created a strong ethos based on the school's motto of 'enter to learn, leave to achieve'. They

take every opportunity to promote the school's own values and how they link to British values, celebrate diversity and remind pupils of the importance of respect and care for one another. This adds significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Parents who responded during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about the school. They praised the work of the headteacher, the high-quality daily care staff provide for pupils and the progress their children are making.

## **Governance of the school**

- A blend of new and experienced governors brings a range of professional skills and knowledge to the school. They show a corporate willingness to develop their governance skills, and they regularly attend training. Governors value the support and guidance provided by the trust to help them establish the local governing body and ensure it meets its delegated responsibilities.
- Governors know the school well. The chair of governors is also a trustee and represents the school effectively at meetings of the trustees. They share the same ambitions for the school shown by school leaders and trust leaders. They know its strengths and areas for further improvement. Minutes of meetings show that governors meet their statutory duties and provide a suitable balance of support and challenge for school leaders.
- The school's finances are monitored effectively. Governors show a clear awareness of how effectively the pupil premium is spent and the impact it is having on the outcomes achieved by disadvantaged pupils.
- The chief executive officer of the academy trust has been instrumental in the school's rapid journey towards outstanding effectiveness. She and the headteacher have worked tirelessly on raising the aspirations of pupils and providing them with an environment in which they feel safe and eager to learn. Her regular support and challenge for the headteacher has prompted immediate action to make improvements, based on their shared view that 'good is not good enough'.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The single central record is complete and well maintained. All necessary checks are made when appointing adults to work with children.
- Appropriate actions are taken to safeguard vulnerable pupils. Suitably trained, designated leaders and other staff show a detailed understanding of the procedures needed to safeguard pupils. Child protection records are currently being updated to ensure that these actions are recorded systematically and that they show that everything possible has been done to protect pupils from harm.
- Links with external support agencies, including the local authority, are firmly established. Effective communication ensures that pupils at risk of harm are known well and are kept safe.
- Staff are observant and act quickly when they spot signs of pupils at risk of neglect or

abuse.

- Training for staff in safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty on radicalisation, is up to date.
- The school site is secure and access to buildings is carefully controlled.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- Strong partnerships with schools in the trust, one of which is charged with training new teachers, enable the headteacher to attract suitably trained staff to join the school. Further mentoring and support from experienced teachers ensures that all new staff settle quickly and develop effective practice. Regular training and wider opportunities to gain further qualifications in middle and senior leadership enable leaders to develop and retain staff. This 'grow your own' approach, coupled with very high expectations of all staff, underpins the school's success in recent years.
- Inspectors' discussions with recently qualified teachers confirmed that they are enjoying their teaching. They feel that they are very well supported and gain from regular opportunities to teach alongside their colleagues. They told inspectors that they can always ask their colleagues for help.
- Pupils are provided with a rich learning environment in which to learn. In classrooms and corridors, the quality of display, poster-style wallpaper and photos of pupils at work and play is exceptional. Staff use these excellent resources well to stimulate ideas and enhance the quality of pupils' writing.
- Learning to read is a top priority and begins at an early age. Leaders aspire to get everyone reading well by the end of Year 1. Phonics is taught systematically. All teachers and support staff are given in-depth training to ensure that class teaching of reading and small group work is consistent. Consequently, results in national phonics screening checks are consistently high. Leaders are intent on closing gaps in pupils' language skills by giving them a broad vocabulary to use in their speaking and writing.
- Listening to pupils read confirmed that reading is taught well. Inspectors found that pupils in Year 3 who joined the school with no English at the start of the year can read fluently and could answer questions about their stories. Books promote confidence as they contain familiar words that pupils can decode using their phonics knowledge.
- Regular training and leaders' monitoring has established common approaches to teaching which have become firmly embedded across all classes. Questioning is used very effectively to stimulate discussion and check understanding. Teachers direct their questions to check that all pupils pay attention and remain engaged in learning. Relations are strong and pupils are eager to respond to staff. Teachers use interactive whiteboards confidently to model learning and illustrate ideas.
- Pupils told inspectors that they learn best in groups 'on their tables' by helping each other, guiding their partners and learning from others. They feel that regular opportunities to look back in their books to remind them of what they have learned previously helps them to understand new work. Expectations of pupils are high. For example, Year 2 pupils were expected to write at length, using technical, scientific language such as 'carbohydrate, protein and diabetes' when planning a balanced healthy meal.

- All teachers apply the school's agreed procedures to manage behaviour. This consistent approach means that pupils understand the expectations of them and know the consequences for poor behaviour. House points and merits have real currency with pupils. They adhere to the rules and show positive attitudes because they want to accrue rewards.
- A key strength of teaching is the teamwork shown by 'professional partners in learning' in lessons. They are knowledgeable and trained to work collaboratively alongside teachers to teach and provide tailored support for learners. Inspectors found that in almost all lessons, this level of support was making a significant contribution to pupils' learning and progress, particularly for pupils with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language.
- The quality of pupils' written work in foundation subjects is high. However, teachers tend to plan learning that aims to promote the quality of pupils' writing rather than enabling them to secure a firm understanding of the skills and knowledge of each subject. Consequently, pupils become expert writers but not good historians or geographers.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils thrive in the safe, welcoming environment provided for them. All pupils are known well by staff. Pupils told inspectors that school is a friendly place to be. They wear their uniforms with pride and are eager to show off the badges awarded to them for one hundred percent attendance, regular merits and house points. Pupils know that those who attend every day and behave really well will qualify for a special trip to 'Adventure Island'.
- Pupils are articulate, listen attentively and consider carefully the answers they provide to questions. Every opportunity is taken to strengthen pupils' language skills, and to build their self-esteem and confidence. For example, when visiting lessons in all key stages, inspectors were welcomed into class by pupil ambassadors who explained clearly and coherently what pupils were doing and learning. They did this with pride and great aplomb.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility and serve others. They readily volunteer as prefects, school councillors and assistants. Voting for head boy and head girl, and class ambassadors, helps to reinforce their understanding of democratic decision-making.
- Weekly assemblies promote pupils' understanding of the beliefs of people from different cultural backgrounds and help them consider the lives of others. Pupils feel that they can share their views and personal concerns and, if they do, they are confident that staff will follow them up.
- Actions to raise attendance and reduce persistent absence have led to improvement. Currently attendance is above average.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- School is a calm, orderly place where pupils respect staff and one another. Pupils' conduct is exceptional. They are polite, respectful and welcoming. They are inquisitive and eager to talk with visitors. They know how to respect the views of others and how to be kind to one another.
- Pupils are welcomed into school each morning by staff. This sets the tone and enables staff to gauge whether pupils are ready to learn. Safety when bringing bikes and scooters onto the school site is carefully monitored.
- Pupils play well together at breaktimes and lunchtimes. However, pupils who met with inspectors said that behaviour is much better in classrooms than it is outside. They feel that the playground is too crowded and there is not much to do, so a few pupils misbehave.
- Pupils feel safe and free from all forms of bullying. They said that, when it happens, mostly name-calling and being unpleasant towards each other, they can approach any member of staff who will help them sort things out.
- Leaders' monitoring records show that very few incidents of poor behaviour occur. No pupils have been excluded permanently and very few pupils are temporarily excluded from school. Governors confirmed with inspectors that this only happens when leaders have exhausted every other means of tackling unacceptable behaviour.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- Over the last three years, the outcomes achieved by pupils in both key stages have been exceptionally high. A much higher-than-average proportion of pupils meet or exceed the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6, ensuring that most pupils are suitably prepared for the rigours of secondary school.
- Standards are consistently high in both key stages. Leaders place great emphasis on making sure that pupils are 'next year ready'. Pupils know what skills and understanding they need in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of each year to ensure they are ready for learning as they move on to the next class.
- Based on their below-average starting points on entry, pupils make remarkable progress. Published progress measures have remained well above average for the past three years. This is achieved through consistently good teaching, regular testing and systematic, periodic assessments to gauge how well all pupils are doing. Those pupils at risk of underachieving are spotted early and given intensive support to enable them to catch up.
- Leaders choose to group pupils together in classes of similar ability. Pupils doing well can move up a set and those needing help to catch up can take time out to consolidate their learning. This ensures that all pupils are suitably challenged. This year, the proportion of the most able pupils exceeding the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 was very high.
- Lower-attaining pupils receive the support they need to make good progress. Effective planning and deployment of an additional adult in all classrooms ensures that pupils receive the help they need. The school's assessment information shows that the

proportion of pupils with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language also make strong progress.

- Systematic teaching of early reading ensures that by the end of Year 1 the proportion of pupils meeting expectations in national phonics screening checks is consistently high. This provides a firm foundation for pupils' further learning in key stages 1 and 2.
- Results in mathematics are notably high. This year 80% of pupils met the expected standard by the end of key stage 1, and, in key stage 2, 96% of pupils in Year 6 met the expected standard. Significantly, 42% of Year 6 pupils reached the higher standard in mathematics.
- Astute spending of additional funding ensures that there is no significant difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils compared with others in the school, or with all pupils nationally. At times, disadvantaged pupils do better than others. For example, this year a larger proportion of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 compared with others in the school.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' books confirmed that the quality of their work over time matches the high standards achieved in tests at the end of each key stage in reading, writing and mathematics. Their scrutiny also found that progress is much less pronounced in foundation subjects. This is because the planning of in-depth learning and assessment of pupils' progress is less well established in most foundation subjects.

### Early years provision

### Outstanding

- Children get off to a wonderful start in nursery. They settle quickly because staff make them feel safe, welcome and cared for. All staff work collegiately, as a team, to enable children to make rapid gains in the vibrant and stimulating environment provided for them. Teaching inspires and motivates them to engage fully with adults and other children. They are taught essential routines so that behaviour and positive attitudes are promptly secured.
- They make rapid progress in their self-confidence, relations and in their speaking and listening skills. Specialist staff support those children in need of additional help with their speech and language. Phonics teaching starts in nursery and aims to give children early reading skills and a broad vocabulary by the end of Reception. Children are well prepared for transition into Year 1.
- Leaders are uncompromising in their pursuit of excellence for their children. They liaise with parents and carers to find out about children's backgrounds. Once at school, they aim to give children the best chances in life. They go out of their way to provide worthwhile experiences for children and expect all staff to do the same.
- Behaviour is impeccable. Children are inquisitive; they play imaginatively, ask questions and follow instructions. In Reception, children readily engage in mark-making and letter formation, often independently and without the support of adults. Most children can read and explain what they have written. Their attempts at spelling basic words are usually correct.
- Staff facilitate teacher-led learning and child-initiated play well. Children move safely between the indoor and outdoor settings. Children move around safely and look after



one another. Learning is made fun. Staff take every opportunity in which they are together with children, for example snack time, to reinforce expectations and develop children's social skills.

- Safeguarding is effective. Staff are vigilant. Access to and from buildings is carefully supervised. Procedures are known well by staff, parents and carers. Intimate care provided in nursery classes is systematically logged.
- Parents who responded by free-text during the inspection enthused about the quality of nursery provision, and the progress made by their children in the early years setting.

## School details

Unique reference number	143128
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10088643

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	524
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Grace Olugbodi
Headteacher	Kerry Geary
Telephone number	01268 543 664
Website	<a href="http://www.phoenix-pri.essex.sch.uk">www.phoenix-pri.essex.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@phoenix-pri.essex.sch.uk">headteacher@phoenix-pri.essex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is much larger than average
- The school opened as an academy in September 2016. It is part of the Lee Chapel Multi-Academy Trust. A board of trustees oversee the school's management, and they delegate some responsibilities to a local governing body.
- The majority of pupils are white British. A significant proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly other white backgrounds, White & Black Caribbean and African backgrounds and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below average.
- Attainment on entry is below average.

- This is its first S5 inspection since converting to an academy.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in English, mathematics and science lessons in both key stages and carried out learning walks to determine the quality of pupils' learning and progress in foundation subjects. One inspector spent time in the early years setting to observe children at work and play. All observations and learning walks were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, three groups of pupils, including the school council, the chair and two other members of the local governing body, and the chief executive officer of the academy trust.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of governors' meetings, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and other information provided by school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work. They considered 31 free-texts sent by parents and carers during the inspection, 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 62 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. They also considered the 43 responses to the survey of pupils' views.

## Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kay Leach

Ofsted Inspector

David Piercy

Ofsted Inspector

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