

Inspection of Petherton Park School

Brook Farm, Newton Road, North Petherton, Somerset, TA6 6NA

Inspection dates: 18–20 January 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Petherton Park is a small school where staff know the pupils and their families inside out. The new headteacher's initial focus was on improving behaviour. He has been successful in this. As a result, the school now provides a safe, caring environment where pupils can learn.

Staff work well together, including specialist therapists, to meet pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Each pupil has a personalised timetable matched to their interests and additional needs. This approach builds their confidence and self-esteem and helps them re-engage in learning. Parents recognise the effectiveness of this work. As one parent put it, 'Since starting at the school, my son has been a different child.'

Pupils say they feel happy and safe at the school, and staff listen to them. Pupils have no concerns about bullying.

Leaders are now focused on improving the curriculum. The curriculum in mathematics, English, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well planned. In these subjects, there are high expectations of pupils. However, leaders have not organised the curriculum in other subjects well enough. As a result, pupils are not challenged to know more and remember more in all of their learning.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders know the school's strengths and what they need to do to improve. Since the appointment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, a year ago, there has been a lot of progress in improving the school. Pupils, staff, parents and a representative from the local authority all acknowledge this.

The headteacher has a clear vision for ensuring that the staff understand and meet pupils' individual needs. He is well supported in this by his staff team.

Each pupil has a pathway plan that forms the basis for their education that links directly to the pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils learn a core curriculum of English, mathematics and PSHE. Staff teach these subjects well. They have organised these subjects effectively to help pupils learn. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and adapt the curriculum when needed. This supports pupils to learn effectively.

Pupils study a breadth of other subjects such as art, music, history, geography, science, technology and physical education (PE). However, leaders have not developed effective plans for these subjects. Leaders have not organised the key knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn in each subject. Leaders have also not identified how teachers should assess pupils to see what they know and remember. As a result, pupils' learning is reduced.

Currently, the responsibility for subject leadership rests with senior leaders. Teachers have been assigned subject responsibilities, but they have not yet reviewed the quality of the curriculum in their respective subjects. This is delaying improvements to the curriculum.

The teaching of early reading is effective. The school has a well-stocked library in which pupils have regular sessions to develop their reading skills. However, only one member of staff has been trained to deliver the reading programme. As a result, all the other staff are unable to support pupils' reading successfully.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Staff are well trained and consistently apply the therapeutic approach (behaviour) policy. They are swift to deal with any behaviour issues. They also provide pupils with the chance to reflect, talk and explain how they are feeling. Pupils commented on how much behaviour has changed for the better over the last year. This has resulted in a calm, purposeful school.

Personal development is a fundamental part of the school's approach to educating its pupils. There is a strong emphasis on helping the pupils understand their feelings and emotions. This helps them to manage their behaviour and become responsible members of society. The integrated therapies team supports staff and pupils well in this aspect of the school's work.

There are high levels of respect between staff and pupils. Through PSHE lessons, pupils learn about the importance of showing respect to everyone, regardless of age, sex, lifestyle or religion. Pupils also learn about healthy lifestyles and how to address mental health issues. They also learn about the importance of having healthy relationships.

There are valuable opportunities to further pupils' learning outside of the classroom. Pupils visit different cultural and historical places to widen their understanding of the world they live in. In addition, pupils participate in activities such as kayaking and rock climbing that help build their resilience.

Older pupils are well supported to explore their options for moving on to the next stage of their education. Work experience and days at a local college help them experience different choices for their futures. Staff support pupils in applying for, visiting and starting at new placements.

Staff feel well supported by the school's leadership team. There is a clear, common purpose across the staff team. Their commitment to meeting each pupil's needs reflects the headteacher's vision. The school is a cohesive community working toward a common goal.

Staff from Phoenix Childcare support the school well. The property is in good condition and well equipped. Leaders from the company challenge and support the headteacher effectively. The integrated therapies team works with pupils to meet

their needs well. The team also works closely with staff to develop their skills to support pupils.

The school meets all the independent school standards, including schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Policies and procedures to keep pupils safe are in place. For example, leaders maintain a detailed record of the required checks they make when appointing adults to work with children.

All staff understand and apply the child protection procedures. Records of the actions taken to address concerns about pupils' welfare are regularly updated. The designated leader of safeguarding checks to ensure that staff take suitable and timely action to keep pupils safe from harm.

Pupils learn about the dangers they might meet online and what to do if they have concerns. Pupils also learn how to understand and communicate their emotions safely.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have focused on improving the teaching of mathematics, English, and PSHE. However, other subjects are not as well developed. Consequently, pupils do not learn as much in these subjects as they should. Leaders should ensure that all subjects are carefully planned so that pupils make good progress across the curriculum.
- Senior leaders have assigned subject responsibilities to teachers. However, subject leaders have not yet monitored the quality of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that each subject leader receives the support that they need to implement their subject effectively.
- The teaching of reading relies on the expertise of one member of staff. This limits the support available to pupils to improve their reading. Leaders should ensure that staff across the school are trained in how to improve pupils' reading.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	135673
DfE registration number	933/6216
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10201943
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Phoenix Childcare Limited
Chair	Darren Jackson
Headteacher	Jamie Wright
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,062 to £84,246
Telephone number	0330 135 8200
Website	www.phoenixschools.org.uk/petherton
Email address	petherton@phoenixschools.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–13 December 2018

Information about this school

- Petherton Park School was previously known as Phoenix Academy. The school's name was changed in 2021. It is an independent special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Since the last standard inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership of the school. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2021. A second deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2021.
- The last standard inspection took place in December 2018. At this time the school was judged to require improvement. A progress monitoring inspection took place in June 2019. The school met all the independent school standards during this inspection. A material change inspection took place in November 2019.
- The school currently uses two alternative providers: Reach Alternative Provision and Portishead Youth Centre.

Information about this inspection

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

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders of the school. Inspectors also met with leaders from Phoenix Learning and Care and had a telephone conversation with a representative from Somerset County Council.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, PSHE and early reading. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors explored safeguarding arrangements by reviewing records, checking the safety of the school site, talking to staff and pupils about how they keep safe, and checking the school's single central record. They met with the school's designated safeguarding leader.
- There were insufficient responses to consider parents' views from Ofsted Parent View. An inspector had telephone conversations with two parents.

Inspection team

Mark Burgess, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

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