

# Inspection of Phoenix Arch School

Drury Way, London NW10 0NQ

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Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are well cared for. Leaders set out to create a culture where pupils become independent and reflective. Leaders and staff promote the values of empathy, genuineness and positivity. Pupils respond well and demonstrate these values through their behaviour. Leaders and staff make sure that pupils are well prepared when it is time for them to move on to secondary school. Staff work in partnership with pupils and their parents and carers to make sure that pupils are supported emotionally for this change. Partnerships with families are a key feature of what the school does well.

Pupils feel happy, safe and secure. They have positive relationships with each other. Pupils are kind, friendly and support one another. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils' behaviour is good. They have good attitudes to learning and try hard in most lessons. Pupils say bullying rarely happens. Pupils have every confidence in adults to keep them safe and free from harm.

The quality of education is not yet good. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Leaders have identified the right priorities for improvement. They are resolute in tackling the school's weaknesses. Even so, there is more work to do.

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

Leaders have not fully considered what knowledge pupils need to learn at each stage of their primary education. Leaders have reviewed some areas of the curriculum successfully, such as reading and computing. Other areas, such as science and physical education (PE), have not been as well thought through. It is not clear what pupils should learn, and in what order. These factors lead to inconsistencies in how the curriculum is delivered across the school.

Where weaknesses in the curriculum have been identified, leaders have not responded with enough urgency. While this is in part due to the pandemic, leaders' actions have not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure the quality of education is good enough. As a result, pupils are performing less well than they should. Sometimes this leads to pupils losing focus in lessons and becoming distracted. This is because pupils are not given the right work to do.

Reading is taught well. A new approach for teaching phonics has recently been introduced. This sets out the sounds that pupils should know and by when. All teachers have received appropriate training. Phonics is taught consistently well throughout the school. Pupils' reading books help them to practise the sounds that they have learned.

The early years provides pupils with a strong start in the school. The focus on communication and language ensures that the youngest children are encouraged to take part in discussion and conversation when they interact with adults. They practise these skills through activities that encourage them to problem-solve and think critically. For

example, they enjoyed finding out how to release items trapped in ice as part of their work on understanding the world.

Pupils are encouraged to explore and learn about others and their cultures. Children in the early years learn to recognise words through symbols and sounds. Adults encourage children to explore and be as independent as possible with familiar and favourite resources. However, given pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities, staff are also aware they must challenge children to try new things and so they rotate learning activities accordingly.

Pupils' behaviour is positive around the school. Pupils are generally polite, well-mannered and welcoming. They come to school regularly and say they enjoy their time here. Pupils learn about how to regulate and reflect on their behaviours. The school's weekly achievement and celebration assemblies use 'Olympic values', such as courage, friendship, determination, equality, excellence, respect and inspiration, to develop pupils' understanding of aspirational qualities which are celebrated with awards.

Through their personal, social, health and economic education lessons, pupils learn how to manage healthy relationships with their peers and how to stay safe online. Adults in school help pupils to be aware of diversity in the world around them. Pupils learn about different cultures, faiths and communities. This helps promote the qualities of mutual respect and tolerance. Leaders' work to support pupils' personal development is a strength of the school.

Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and well-being. Staff are proud to be working in the school despite the challenges recent years have posed. They appreciate the support leaders provide, and this has been especially the case through the pandemic. Staff would like more training and are keen to improve their teaching so they can do their best for all the pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors give a high priority to keeping pupils safe. All staff are well trained and receive regular updates in safeguarding. Staff know how to report concerns when they arise. When an incident occurs, leaders log any concerns and act on them. They are tenacious in securing support where necessary. They work well with external agencies to ensure families get the support they need. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. For example, they know the importance of not sharing information online.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not have the expert knowledge needed in the subjects that they teach. This means that they are not able to present key concepts in a way that pupils can understand and access. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the necessary induction, training and development they require to do this effectively.
- Curriculum thinking, including in science and PE, is not sequenced well enough. Some plans are still under review. Leaders have not considered what pupils must learn in each subject carefully enough. Teachers do not consistently help pupils build on what they already know in some subjects. Consequently, pupils do not retain some key knowledge. Leaders should ensure that a well-sequenced curriculum is in place in all subjects. Leaders should consider what knowledge is essential for pupils to learn and in what order.

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

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101581
<b>Local authority</b>	Brent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10200591
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	54
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Anna Gray
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judith Towell
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.phoenixarchschool.co.uk">www.phoenixarchschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Phoenix Arch is a school for children with a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator and subject leaders.
- The inspectors met with members of the teaching staff and with teaching support staff. The inspectors met with members of the governing body and the school business manager.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, computing, science and PE. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke with leaders about their work in other curriculum subjects, such as art and mathematics.
- The inspectors checked documents relating to safeguarding on the school's online recording system. The inspectors looked at safeguarding policies and procedures. They talked to staff about how they keep pupils safe. The inspectors talked to pupils about how they learn to stay safe.
- The inspectors met with staff to discuss the training they have received, how leaders support them and how workload is managed.
- The inspectors took account of the 27 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text commentaries.
- The lead inspector considered the 29 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

### **Inspection team**

Karen Matthews, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Diane Rochford	Ofsted Inspector

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