

Inspection of Phoenix Bay School

The Pavilion, 3 Seale Hayne, Newton Abbott, Devon TQ12 6NQ

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the nurture and individualised support their child receives. They say their children settle quickly and praise the school for helping their children re-engage with learning. However, the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, has not carried out statutory safeguarding duties effectively. This potentially puts pupils at risk.

The school provides support for pupils with social and emotional needs, all of whom have experienced significant trauma. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many have struggled to learn in other settings. Some subjects within the curriculum are not designed well. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge over time.

Staff have created a welcoming learning environment. They have high expectations of how they want pupils to behave. Pupils appreciate the rewards through the 'ping ping' system. They say the best thing in school is 'the adults, as they are all supportive and caring'. Pupils say that bullying does not happen.

Pupils talk clearly about how to keep physically and mentally healthy, including healthy eating. They know that everyone should be treated equally and with respect. However, pupils' understanding of different cultures and religions is less well developed.

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

The proprietor has not ensured that important safeguarding requirements are followed. For example, there is no admissions register. This is a legal requirement. Leaders have not considered in enough detail pupils' safety both on and off site. Pupils' individual risk assessments are poor. As a result, the proprietor fails to meet parts 3 and 8 of the independent school standards.

Leaders are ambitious about what they want pupils to know as part of their 'big picture' vision for the curriculum, including vocational education. Pupils receive relevant careers advice. This supports their understanding of the world of work and ensures they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. However, this is in its early stages of implementation.

Leaders understand the importance of all pupils learning to read fluently. Pupils who still require phonics support follow a systematic programme. Staff provide relevant support for those who struggle. Despite this, leaders recognise there is still more to do. They have started to develop pupils' love of reading. However, leaders and staff have not yet found ways to promote reading for pleasure for some pupils.

In mathematics, teachers have designed sequences of learning in place to develop pupils' knowledge. There are plans in place to strengthen the curriculum further. Appropriate resources to support pupils' understanding of new concepts are readily

available. However, staff have not assessed some pupils' mathematical needs accurately. As a result, learning does not consistently build on what they know and can do. This delays them from moving through the mathematics curriculum as quickly as they should, in order to catch up.

In some subjects, such as computing and English, leaders have crafted an appropriately sequenced curriculum. Staff adapt learning effectively to meet the needs of individual pupils. However, some subjects within the wider curriculum are still developing. For example, in geography, the knowledge staff want pupils to know is not explicit enough. Leaders have not identified the smaller steps needed to meet individual needs. This means pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Pupils show positive behaviours and attitudes in school. They appreciate their social interactions with staff and other pupils throughout the school day. For example, all staff and pupils interact and share lunch together. The key-worker system and high staffing ratio ensure that time can be given to pupils' personal and emotional support. Pupil attitudes are less strong when the planned curriculum is not as engaging. They say at times, in some subjects, including reading and science, lessons can be boring.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum enables pupils to think about and discuss their place in society. Weekly themes promote pupils' understanding of the wider community. These have included Black History Month, mental health and well-being, and their thoughts around the Holocaust. However, pupils' understanding of different religions, cultures and fundamental British values is less developed. As a result, they do not always see how these impact on them within today's society.

The proprietor has recently set up a governance advisory board. Members are gaining an understanding of the work of the school, but support and challenge to leaders are in the early stages of implementation. There is not yet an effective systematic cycle of monitoring to quality assure the provision. This includes checks on meeting the independent school standards. The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Staff, including those new to the school, receive appropriate and personalised support from school leaders. They appreciate leaders' concerns for their well-being and workload. Relationships in the school are extremely positive. Staff say they feel part of a team, and all are supportive of each other.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The proprietor does not have sufficient oversight of the statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding. For example, appropriate risk assessments are not in place for pupils with medical needs. As a result, this could place children at risk.

The proprietor has ensured that the register of checks made on the suitability of staff is carried out appropriately. Staff understand how to spot and record signs of concern. They know these will be taken seriously. Staff understand the risks pupils face within the local community. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and can talk about issues that might affect them.

Relevant safeguarding policies are on the school website for parents.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- As a matter of urgency, the proprietor and advisory governing board must ensure the well-being and safety of pupils by ensuring that:
 - an accurate admissions register is drawn up and maintained in line with legislation.
 - relevant risk assessments in relation to the safety of individual pupils on and off site are robust and detailed including for those pupils with medical needs.
- The proprietor does not demonstrate the required knowledge appropriate to their role. This means that not all of the independent school standards are met. Leaders must take action to ensure all independent school standards are met consistently.
- In some subjects, leaders have not planned the content and sequence of the curriculum explicitly enough. As a result, pupils do not build their knowledge incrementally. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in each subject is ambitious, well sequenced and identifies the important knowledge so pupils learn well over time.
- Leaders have not created a strong culture of reading for pleasure. As a result, most pupils are disinterested in reading. All staff need to ensure they expose pupils to a range of appropriate texts and read often and widely to and with pupils.
- The curriculum for personal development is not designed well enough to support pupils' understanding of religious beliefs, cultures and fundamental British values. As a result, pupils are not as well prepared for some aspects of life in modern Britain. Leaders must ensure that all provision for personal development enables pupils to develop a secure understanding of modern society.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	148761
DfE registration number	880/6009
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10239795
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent Special School
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Phoenix Bay Ltd
Chair	Jill Bainton (Chair of the Governance Advisory Board)
Headteacher	Ross Banks
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,000
Telephone number	01803 220750
Website	www.phoenixbay.co.uk
Email address	hello@phoenixbay.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department of Education on 21 September 2021. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and/or mental health needs. Some pupils also have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. All pupils on roll have education, health and care plans. All placements are currently funded by Torbay Council.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- Since the pre-registration inspection in August 2021, the school has moved site.

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.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor (who is also the headteacher) and the teaching and learning lead, both of whom oversee special educational needs in the school. Inspectors held a phone call with the new chair of the recently formed governor advisory board and a representative from the SEND team at the local authority of Torbay.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with key leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and groups of staff, talked with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other curriculum subjects, including geography, science and computing.
- Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding lead and school business manager to evaluate the school's safeguarding procedures and to check safeguarding records, including the school's single central record.
- Inspectors conducted a range of activities to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards, including the safety and suitability of the premises. They scrutinised risk assessments and associated policies.
- Inspectors considered the four responses from parents who completed the online free-text aspect of the Ofsted Parent View survey.

The school's proposed change to its premises and the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school meets the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002. The outcome of this part of the inspection is:

- **The school does not meet the independent school standards relevant to the material change.**
 - **One aspect of the material change request has already been implemented.**
- The school was required to move premises at the end of September 2022. It sought new premises in which it is now based.
 - The proprietor also requested to increase pupil numbers from 12 to 24. Currently, part of the building is being renovated in order to provide space for vocational courses to run on site. This is not yet complete. Due to the open-plan structure of the school currently and the movement of pupils on roll in that space, it is not clear how an increase of numbers with pupils will be organised in order to meet their special educational needs and safety. The school has not met all of the independent school standards.

Information about the material change inspection

- This material change inspection was commissioned by the DfE at the proprietor's request. The school moved site due to unforeseen circumstances it states were beyond its control at the end of September 2022. Inspectors were asked to consider the suitability of the new site and an increase in the maximum number of pupils from 12 to 24.
- There is no change to the nature of the special educational needs that the school will cater for.
- The material change in relation to the school site has already been implemented.
- This is the first material change inspection in respect of such changes that the school applied to make.
- Inspectors reviewed policies and procedures in relation to this material change to check compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Heather Barraclough, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Donna Briggs

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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