

Inspection of The Phoenix Collegiate

Clarkes Lane, West Bromwich, West Midlands B71 2BX

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff and pupils work together to foster a sense of community at The Phoenix Collegiate. Pupils value their education. One pupil summed up pupils' positive views about school saying, 'I am not the kind of person who should like school, but I like coming here.'

Pupils feel safe, and staff look after their well-being. They behave sensibly and responsibly. Their behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils settle quickly in class and begin learning immediately. On occasion, a few pupils misbehave. Staff deal with this promptly. This means that teachers can concentrate on teaching, so pupils learn well.

Pupils work hard. Teachers have high expectations of them and their potential. They learn with confidence because they trust their teachers. This means pupils make good progress because they remember previous learning. Consequently, they understand new topics better.

Parents and carers say that this is a busy and well-organised school. Staff work hard to resolve concerns that they or pupils raise, including bullying. Staff address these concerns well, as one parent said, 'I cannot fault the support this school provides.'

Staff run a range of exciting clubs and varied activities, which many pupils attend. Clubs range from playing dodgeball to joining the combined cadet force.

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

Leaders have constructed an ambitious curriculum. This meets, and often exceeds, the requirements of the national curriculum. This well-thought-out curriculum helps pupils to remember important 'sticky knowledge'. For instance, in English, teachers frequently check that pupils remember important prior knowledge. This helps pupils to think in depth about their previous work and build on what they have learned before.

Teachers, including early career teachers, have strong subject knowledge. They keep this knowledge fresh by taking part in relevant professional development. Teachers know how to deliver the well-sequenced curriculum effectively. This deepens pupils' understanding. For instance, in a BTEC business class, sixth-form students learn about the drivers of innovation and enterprise. They use these factors to understand the social and economic impact of new products in the marketplace.

Teachers' use of assessment is effective. They check pupils' knowledge and understanding with care. Consequently, they spot misconceptions right away. For example, in a mathematics lesson, some pupils misunderstood the meaning of 'debit'. The teacher stopped the lesson and re-explained the concept. This clarification consolidated their understanding.

Leaders have broadened the range of subjects that pupils can study at key stage 4. Pupils choose from a wide range of BTECs and GCSEs. Less than a fifth of pupils study subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). This is because too few pupils choose a modern foreign language. However, leaders have clear plans to address this.

Leaders use the funding for disadvantaged pupils well. They employ extra staff to boost disadvantaged boys' literacy skills. This is helping these pupils to improve their attendance and is having a positive impact on their learning. This has narrowed the achievement gap between them and their peers.

Leaders have used an effective approach to improve pupils' reading. Trained staff provide early readers with daily personalised support. Subsequently, pupils that need extra help improve as they learn to read unfamiliar words confidently and accurately. This helps them in all of their lessons.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Teachers have the specialist knowledge to mould tasks to meet pupils' needs. For instance, in drama, teachers simplify instructions for pupils with complex needs. These adjustments help pupils to appreciate the cultural differences in the play, 'Blood Brothers'.

Leaders have created an exciting personal development curriculum. Pupils can learn self-discipline as cadets in the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Royal Marines. Sixth-form students can train to be journalists and reporters. Local newspapers have published students' articles. These experiences boost students' confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils, including the disadvantaged and those with SEND, receive impartial careers advice. They learn from local employers and visit nearby colleges. Pupils say staff prepare them well for their next steps.

Trained staff provide strong support for those few pupils who need help to improve their behaviour. These pupils will spend time in the school's on-site specialist provision. As a result of careful planning, some pupils' attitudes and behaviour improve significantly. On returning to the main school, a handful of these pupils need ongoing guidance. Leaders have plans to ensure that the behaviour of these pupils continues to improve.

Governors know The Phoenix Collegiate well. They have a solid grasp of the school's priorities. This helps them to hold leaders to account effectively.

Staff praise leaders' consideration of their workload. No one sends emails after midday each Friday. One teacher commented that this clears the run-up to the weekend of unnecessary clutter.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leaders work hard to keep pupils safe. Leaders provide annual safeguarding training and weekly updates for staff. This means staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Safeguarding staff work closely with local agencies. They share information so that staff are alert to any specific relevant issues or concerns. When necessary, they revise practices to strengthen the school's culture of safeguarding.

Pupils feel safe. Staff provide the support pupils need to help them recognise and avoid risks. Pupils benefit from lessons about staying safe when online, and they know who to speak to if they have a concern.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that every pupil who receives support in the on-site specialist provision behaves consistently well on their return to the main school. As a result, some pupils require continued specialist intervention. Leaders should ensure all staff implement individual support plans effectively to help these pupils succeed.
- Leaders have not put the EBacc at the heart of the curriculum for key stage 4 pupils. As a result, too few pupils study the full suite of subjects that make up the EBacc, particularly in modern foreign languages. Leaders should design a clear strategy that encourages more pupils to study a language at least until the end of Year 11.

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.

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

Unique reference number	136091
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10256938
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,929
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Leigh Pepper
Headteacher	Michael Smith
Website	www.aspirebelievesucceed.com
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in January 2018.
- Twenty-two pupils attend alternative provision off site at four providers. All four providers are registered with the Department for Education.
- The school meet the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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.
- The inspectors met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and business and enterprise. In each subject, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders and visited lessons. They spoke with all subject teachers and met with a selection of pupils.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for personal development. Inspectors talked with pupils in key stages 3 and 4 and sixth-form students. During their discussions, they asked pupils about relationships education, equal opportunities, careers guidance, safety and other matters related to personal development. Inspectors also gathered evidence to evaluate pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked school policies and the single central record of checks on adults in school. They spoke with the designated safeguarding lead about safeguarding and child protection procedures. They spoke with a broad range of pupils and discussed safeguarding with staff and governors.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who completed Ofsted's online survey. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including records pertaining to self-evaluation and school improvement. They also considered records relating to bullying, behaviour, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. They took account of a range of curriculum planning documents, including those related to relationships and sex education and health education.

Inspection team

Antony Edkins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Russell Hinton	Ofsted Inspector
Stewart Tait	Ofsted Inspector
Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Darren Bishop	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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