

Inspection of a good school: Phoenix Park Academy

Harold Street, Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire DN32 7NQ

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 September 2023

Outcome

Phoenix Park Academy continues to be a good school.

The executive principal of this school is Phil Hutchinson. This school is part of Wellspring Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mark Wilson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Cheryl Hobson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are offered a fresh start at this school. All have experienced previous difficulties in mainstream education. All have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff provide calm, dedicated help to pupils. They get to know pupils very well. There are warm, caring relationships. Pupils feel safe and respected as individuals.

The school provides carefully considered support and personalised education to meet pupils' needs. This includes pupils who struggle to attend. Staff check often that support is appropriate and that pupils' curriculum pathways are aspirational. There are high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. Staff teach pupils a 'toolkit' of strategies to help them to understand and manage their own behaviour.

Pupils' next steps are at the heart of the school's work. They broaden their knowledge and skills during their time here. Older pupils gain academic and vocational qualifications. Pupils enjoy a range of outdoor education opportunities, including rock climbing. They take part in activities to inform them about future career choices. These include experiencing workshops about engineering and renewable energy. They develop life skills by holding positions of responsibility and taking part in work experience. Pupils like cooking, and enjoy trips as rewards, such as go-karting.

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

Pupils' needs are assessed thoroughly when they join the school. Any gaps in pupils' learning are identified quickly. Staff tailor support and the type of curriculum to pupils' individual learning and personal development needs.

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. It is clearly sequenced. Staff match learning to what pupils know already and what they need to learn next in different subjects. Pupils learn in small groups. Classroom environments are calm places for them to learn in. Pupils, including those with education, health and care plans, are well supported. Staff provide a range of resources to reduce pupils' anxiety and to help them to learn. Skilled staff are on hand to provide pastoral support. Pupils appreciate being able to use 'chill-out' rooms to take time out.

The school liaises well with commissioning schools and the local authority. The school aims to ensure that pupils who can return to mainstream school do so in a timely way. Teaching strategies support this transition. In mathematics, pupils in the primary phase are taught using a similar approach to that used in most mainstream schools. This helps pupils to keep up with their mainstream peers.

Reading is a high priority. Pupils read often. They enjoy reading a variety of texts using the school's online reading tool. An appropriate phonics programme supports pupils in the early stages of learning to read. Books match the sounds that pupils know. However, some pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise using their phonics, to develop their fluency.

The trust supports the school's strong focus on reducing persistent absence. Creative initiatives, such as the minibus that has been converted into a mobile classroom, are having a positive impact. Staff take the minibus out to teach pupils in the community. A broad vocational and outdoor education offer helps to motivate pupils to learn. There are good examples of how the school has improved the attendance of individual pupils over time.

The curriculum to support pupils' wider development is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils learn about a variety of relevant themes. These include diversity, safe use of social media, knife crime and fundamental British values. Pupils learn how to stay safe in their local community and learn about the importance of good mental health. They receive appropriate relationships and sex education and health education. There is a suitable programme to teach pupils about potential opportunities for further education, training and employment. Pupils receive independent advice and guidance to help them to make informed decisions.

Most staff enjoy working at the school and with their colleagues. They value the training provided by the school and the trust. They feel that the school treats them fairly and with respect for their welfare and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils in the early stages of learning to read do not always have sufficient opportunities to practise using their phonics. This makes it difficult for them to develop their fluency. Leaders should ensure that teachers know how to support pupils to practise their phonics to help them develop their fluency when reading.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141101
Local authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10242245
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Cheryl Hobson
Principal	Phil Hutchinson
Website	www.phoenixparkacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school operates as an alternative provision academy for pupils who have been excluded, or are at risk of exclusion, from a mainstream school.
- The large majority of pupils who attend the school have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Since the last inspection, several staff have joined the school.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the executive principal, two executive vice-principals, the heads of centre, safeguarding and pastoral leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and some curriculum leaders. They met with some members of staff, including an early career teacher, and some pupils. The lead inspector met with the director of learning for the trust and spoke on the telephone with the chief executive officer for the trust and the vice-chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teaching staff and spoke to some pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work, where available, and some pupils' personalised learning plans. They listened to some pupils reading to an adult.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects that are taught through the 'elements' curriculum. These subjects include art, design and technology, history and geography.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, staff and pupils about the school's approach to safeguarding pupils in school. Inspectors checked the single central record and reviewed records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Checks were made on staff training and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for parents and carers, pupils and staff as well as to the school's own surveys.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christina Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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