

Inspection of Phoenix School of Therapeutic Education

83 East Bank Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S2 3PX

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This school provides exceptional education for pupils in a secure hospital setting. Pupils are admitted to the hospital with significant emotional and mental health needs. They live in wards attached to the school.

The school is a calm, nurturing environment. Staff across the school and wards gain a comprehensive understanding of pupils' individual needs. The school's partnership with hospital clinicians and therapists provides the right balance of education and support for pupils' mental health needs.

Pupils are highly supervised. Skilled staff provide admirable support to help pupils to manage their emotions and behaviour well. Established routines and clear expectations help pupils to feel safe. They develop strong, positive relationships with staff. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are supported to attend well. This includes teaching pupils on the wards when they are too ill to go to the school.

The school has high aspirations of and for its pupils. Teachers do their absolute best for pupils. They successfully inspire pupils to engage in learning. They help pupils to achieve as well as they can. Each pupil has a curriculum precisely tailored to their individual needs. Most obtain a range of qualifications. The school's determined ambition, to help pupils have 'the confidence and self-belief to progress further in life', is being realised.

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

School and ward staff work seamlessly together. They assess, identify and meet pupils' individual needs extremely well. Before being admitted to the hospital, most pupils have missed significant periods of education due to their ill health. The school makes sure that each pupil's curriculum pathway is ambitious and that their learning is purposeful. Teachers match learning impressively well to the curriculum in pupils' mainstream schools when possible.

Sixth-form students, as with all pupils across the school, receive an extraordinarily high level of support. Leaders leave no stone unturned in doing all that is possible to meet the individual academic needs of pupils who are placed here. There is an exceptionally broad range of bespoke pathways in place. All pupils, including those in the sixth form, do as well as can reasonably be expected in the difficult circumstances with which they are faced. Pupils enjoy excellent one-to-one teaching and support. Teachers take genuine pleasure in helping pupils to make significant progress academically, personally and socially.

Teachers, including those who teach sixth-form students, have expert knowledge of the subjects they teach. They support pupils to be resilient and develop their self-esteem. They check often what pupils know and can remember. Teachers use flexible strategies to support pupils in lessons. They take time to make sure that pupils learn in a way that is calm and meets their individual style of learning. Pupils

are motivated and engage well in learning. The range of qualifications, courses and awards on offer is impressive. Pupils are rightly proud of what they achieve. Leaders take every opportunity to support pupils to gain accreditations so that they are well prepared for when they leave the hospital. This includes for adulthood and their next steps in education, training or employment.

All pupils have individual care plans and education plans. These plans contain a remarkable level of detail about pupils. Teachers use this information well to identify precise targets for pupils to work towards. Where pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), learning is appropriately mapped and tailored to meet the stated outcomes.

Since the last inspection, the school has prioritised reading, and especially the joy of reading. This work has been remarkably successful. There is now a strong culture of reading. Teachers provide prompt support for pupils who struggle to read. This includes extra reading practice and support for phonics when necessary. Pupils read regularly and with enthusiasm. They enjoy the recently renovated library which now includes audiobook choices. They appreciate that they can borrow books which cover a broad and diverse range of literature and authors. Staff and pupils across the hospital are encouraged to share and publicise their current reading recommendations.

The curriculum to promote pupils' personal development is exemplary. Leaders rise above the challenges that this secure school setting presents for some aspects of pupils' personal development. They make sure that no matter how long their stay in hospital, pupils understand and recognise their potential. Pupils develop their resilience and strength of character. They benefit from high-quality therapeutic support for their mental health needs. They enjoy music and art enrichment activities. They learn first aid and how to cope with risks to their safety in the wider world. Whenever possible, pupils enjoy trips to the theatre, places of worship and visits in the local community. They enjoy learning from visiting speakers such as community police officers. They participate in debates about issues such as the legal justice system, diversity and consent. They are encouraged to explore their interests and share them with others. For example, the school is proud of the leaflet a pupil created to raise awareness of the work of young carers. This was so successful that it has been shared with all the proprietor's group of hospitals. Pupils are particularly thrilled to be taking an active part in planning and organising their upcoming school prom. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, receive high-quality independent advice and guidance about further education, employment and training.

Staff morale is high. Staff describe working here as a joy and a privilege. They develop a high level of expertise. They receive strong support for their welfare and workload.

The proprietor and governors are highly skilled and knowledgeable. They ensure that the school meets the independent school standards. The proprietor maintains frequent and thorough checks on the education, health, safety and welfare of pupils.

Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to keep pupils safe. Strategies and policies for dealing with behaviour, health and safety are suitable. The school's safeguarding policy, which reflects the latest guidance, is available on the school's website. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	142912
DfE registration number	373/6006
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10321500
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	13
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cygnnet Healthcare Ltd
Chair	Stephen Firn
Headteacher	Katy Edmondson
Annual fees	£36,480
Telephone number	01142793350
Website	www.cygnnethealth.co.uk
Email address	phoenixschool@cygnnethealth.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 to 13 February 2020

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils admitted to Cygnet Hospital Sheffield. Pupils are admitted to the hospital with significant mental health needs. The hospital has three wards. One of these wards is a psychiatric intensive care unit.
- Some pupils have an EHC plan. Referrals to the school come through a range of local authorities across the country.
- The school is registered to admit 38 pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative education provisions.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in 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 held meetings with the headteacher, the national head of education for the proprietor, the deputy headteacher, the designated safeguarding leads, the national special educational needs coordinator for the proprietor, the education officer, some curriculum leaders and some teachers and staff. Inspectors also met with representatives of the governing body, including the hospital director and clinical manager. Inspectors spoke to some parents and carers on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons and spoke to teaching staff. They spoke to some pupils, with an adult present, about their learning. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the curriculum leaders for science and humanities, scrutinised leaders' planning and looked at samples of pupils' work for these subjects.
- The lead inspector toured the school with the headteacher.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive

culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. Checks were made on staff training and safeguarding procedures.

- Inspectors checked the implementation of risk assessment and health and safety policies, including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mary Cook	His Majesty's Inspector
James Duncan	His Majesty's Inspector

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