

Inspection of Phoenix Arch School

Drury Way, London NW10 0NQ

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 June 2024

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Requires improvement |

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a calm and nurturing place. All pupils have autism. Their care and welfare are a priority for all staff. Pupils benefit from warm working relationships. Pupils are happy and safe. Adults know pupils extremely well. This helps staff to regulate and improve pupils' behaviour. Pupils are friendly and supportive to each other.

The school has high expectations for all pupils. There is clear ambition for pupils to become equipped to flourish in the future. Over time, pupils make strong progress in their social skills. Pupils enjoy an increasingly effective academic curriculum.

Personal development is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils from all age groups enjoy playing sports together at lunchtime. They benefit from many opportunities to understand the community and the world outside the school. Pupils enjoy many visits to local landmarks and residential experiences.

Pupils learn in a lovely environment with outdoor spaces. They are carefully encouraged to become increasingly independent and adventurous. Pupils develop important character traits. These include teamwork and confidence. They use these transferrable skills to overcome challenges.

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

The school has worked hard to improve opportunities for pupils since the last inspection. Pupils now receive a good quality of education. As part of these improvements, leadership and governance have been strengthened and the curriculum has been transformed.

The school has designed a curriculum, across all subject areas, to meet the additional needs of pupils well. The knowledge and skills that leaders want pupils to learn are planned to build in a logical order over time. However, in a few areas, the content pupils learn does not always build appropriately on what they have learned before. Sometimes the learning pupils are expected to know and remember is not explicitly defined or adapted. This is particularly the case for some pupils with complex needs. This limits deeper knowledge and skills so that they know and remember more over time.

Teachers select activities which interest and enthuse pupils. They are quick to correct any misconceptions. A 'pathway model' helps pupils to learn the curriculum alongside pupils with similar needs. These pathways are ambitious. Teachers allow pupils to test out ideas and think for themselves, for example through problem-solving in mathematics.

Reading and communication skills are a high priority for the school. Highly effective systems are in place to help pupils to read and develop a love of books. Pupils have access to a well-stocked library and are proud to collect merit points to celebrate their reading progress. Leaders are determined to build pupil confidence in

communicating, especially pupils who do not yet use verbal language. Learning plans mostly support the communication needs of pupils with autism. Staff are experts at teaching pupils to read. Pupils who are not ready for the formal phonics programme are supported daily by experienced staff. They share books, identify sounds and help pupils to build their attention during lessons.

The school is committed to broadening pupils' interests further. Pupils access a wealth of wider experiences that help pupils make the transition to the next stage of their lives. They visit museums and the cinema, travel by public transport and participate in sporting competitions. Younger pupils visit the local shops and learn how to exchange goods. Pupils visit different places of worship. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online and when they are in the community. All these experiences help to develop pupils' confidence and their understanding of the wider world.

Leaders and governors have developed highly effective systems to improve attendance and punctuality. Leaders and support staff have clear attendance strategies in place to support pupils and their families. As a result, they are having a positive impact on pupils' attendance.

The governing body recognises the need to support staff during a period of change for the school. Most staff recognise that their well-being and workload are carefully considered. Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. They offer appropriate support and challenge to the school. Leaders and governors have been successful in securing positive changes to pupils' educational experiences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum does not focus sufficiently on helping all children to build their knowledge and skills step by step. This means that some children do not develop and deepen their understanding consistently well across all subjects and areas of learning, including in communication and language. The school needs to ensure that curricular thinking is clearly designed and adapted to meet all pupils' needs, especially those with complex needs.

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

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| Unique reference number | 101581 |
| Local authority | Brent |
| Inspection number | 10323286 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 55 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Anna Gray |
| Headteacher | Judith Towell |
| Website | www.phoenixarchschool.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 2 and 3 February 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the leadership team. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in November 2023.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. These mostly support needs associated with speech, language, communication, interaction and autism. Pupils also have medical and complex learning needs.
- There were no nursery-aged pupils on roll during this inspection.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders over the course of the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors met with the leaders responsible for personal development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils formally throughout the inspection and spoke with them informally at social times and in lessons.
- A range of school documents were reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, staff, and parents and carers gathered through Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Phil Garnham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kieran Bird

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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