

# Phoenix High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100359
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hammersmith and Fulham
<b>Inspection number</b>	307373
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Lynes HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	768
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Rosemary Farrar
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr William Atkinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 May 2003
<b>School address</b>	The Curve London W12 0RQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8749 1141
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8743 0393

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Phoenix High School serves a culturally diverse community within a challenging context. Students start in Year 7 with levels of prior learning that are significantly below that typically found nationally. Many also arrive after the traditional start of the school year; about a tenth are refugees or asylum seekers. Around half the students speak English as an additional language (EAL), about a tenth at the early stages. Almost two-thirds of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the largest number being those with behavioural, emotional, or social difficulties. The school was awarded specialist status in science in 2004.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The Phoenix is a remarkable school; it continues to transform the life chances of both students and their families. It can do this because the school operates from a deeply rooted understanding, and heartfelt appreciation of, the challenging circumstances that many of the students come from. This enables the school to make sophisticated provision for their personal development that develops articulate, confident young people. This is particularly impressive considering the significant number of students who have behavioural, emotional, or social difficulties. Add to this inspirational leadership, excellent systems for tracking student's academic progress and an exemplary curriculum and the ingredients to support outstanding academic achievement are in place. This is a school where every child's future really does matter.

There is no doubt that the school's specialist status in science has played a very significant part in the dramatic improvements seen since the last inspection. The science curriculum is very comprehensive and inclusive. Targets set for examination results in the specialist subjects have been consistently exceeded, and a significant number of students start studying the next level a year early. Students believe that success in science has boosted their confidence and motivated them to succeed in other subjects. Inspectors agree.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The school understands that teachers need to plan lessons that give students more opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. As one said, 'let us do more in lessons'. The school uses excellent systems to track progress that provide teachers with high quality information on each individual. These systems combined with the exemplary arrangements for ensuring personal development, underpin the outstanding academic achievement. However, students are not always clear what they need to do to make academic progress.

Responses received from parents to the confidential questionnaire indicate strong support for the school; one stating 'as the guardian of a child that has just come into the UK for the first time I feel that the Phoenix has given her a great chance and the progress she has made is incredible'. A significant minority of parents reported that they would like more effective communication with the school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Provide students with more opportunities to be involved in their own learning and develop their own ideas
- The guidance given to students so that they know, and fully understand, how to take the next steps in their learning

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Achievement at the Phoenix is outstanding. Students attain examination results in Year 11 that are broadly similar to those found nationally; because of their exceptionally low starting points, this is outstanding progress. A large number of students join the Phoenix after the start of Year 7, yet this has not proved to be a barrier to their making good progress.

The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE grades at A\*-C has surpassed the national figure over the past three years. The figure when English and mathematics are included

is lower, but has more than doubled during the same period. Results in Key Stage 3 tests are below the national average but this still represents good progress. Particularly strong progress has been evident in science at Key Stage 3 over the past three years.

The achievement of students at both key stages is consistently good or outstanding across the different ability and ethnic groups within the school. Internal examinations and monitoring indicate that the current levels of attainment are similar to those achieved last year, which would again represent outstanding progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students behave very well in lessons and around the school. They enjoy being in the school, feel that it is very safe and caring and would enthusiastically recommend it to others. They are considerate and move around quickly and considerately. Relationships between students and with staff are open and supportive. They report that the few instances of bullying are dealt with very effectively by prefects or staff. Attendance is below the national average but about the same as schools in similar circumstances and the school takes all available measures to improve it.

Learners take a full part in the life of the school including the outstandingly wide range of sporting and other extra-curricular activities. There are many opportunities for students to make positive contributions to the community and links with outside organizations are strong. Students have high expectations for their futures, feel they are being given appropriate advice and are looking forward to success. All older students take part in work experience and over three quarters go on to further education. Involvement in charities, trips and visits help to give a wide perspective that adds significantly to their personal development. The students respond very positively to the school's active promotion of safe and healthy lifestyles, and they benefit from the good, well-structured work in class on sex education, drugs and alcohol abuse. The lunch menus feature healthy choices, and there is an excellent level of awareness of healthy lifestyles.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers show enthusiasm for their subjects and plan their lessons well with activities that are appropriate, interesting and varied. Teachers' excellent relationships with students create a very good atmosphere and they come to lessons ready to learn. Literacy is emphasised very well, enhancing language skills across the curriculum. Probing questioning techniques challenge students to think. Teachers and teaching assistants know and understand the learning needs of their students very well. As a result, all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, make outstanding progress, equal to that of their peers.

Most lessons have good pace and in the best lessons the effective use of whiteboard technology promotes good learning. In some lessons students tend to be passive and they are not given enough opportunities to be fully involved in their own learning. They are not always encouraged to assess for themselves how well they think they have done and to ask for more help if they

feel they need it. Books are marked regularly, but not always with enough detail to help students progress to the next steps in their learning as well as they might do. Lessons are monitored rigorously, under the guidance of the learning leaders. Whilst there are systems in place to ensure the consistency of the monitoring, observations do not always focus clearly enough on linking teaching to learning and progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

Students at the Phoenix benefit from an excellent curriculum that provides appropriately challenging pathways that match individual abilities and needs. The school's science specialism greatly enriches the provision. This includes providing three levels of study for science at Key Stage 4. Through the flexibility of the provision, the most able pupils benefit from early entry into Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE science and mathematics examinations. All pupils study a vocational course in information and communication technology. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities receive well targeted and appropriate support.

There is an impressive and popular range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. These include a large number sporting opportunities that further the healthy lifestyles of the students. Additionally, there are many academic activities after school, at weekends and during the school holidays which support and further learning. Strong partnerships with neighbouring schools and colleges provide an excellent range of work-related and work-based learning opportunities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Students and parents are very appreciative of the strong emphasis the school puts on the care of its students. One typical comment received from parents was, 'Phoenix School is really taking care of my children'. Students who join the school are rapidly integrated thanks to close relationship with primary feeder schools and careful assessment of new learners' needs. All students, including those who may be vulnerable, receive strong and effective help. Counsellors, mentors and 'buddies' are available for anyone going through a difficult emotional time. Students with specific academic or physical difficulties or special talents speedily receive excellent support. The required procedures for health and safety and for child protection are fully in place. Safeguarding procedures are in place and have been recently reviewed. The school is aware of the importance of working closely with the local authority in the monitoring of such issues.

The school has developed excellent systems for tracking the progress of all students in such a way that they are set challenging, but realistic, targets in each subject. Individual underachievement is identified early and very effective systems are put in place to address it. Although students understand what levels they are expected to achieve and how well they are doing at present, they are not always clear about the best means of achieving them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The school is exceptionally well led by a charismatic, indefatigable headteacher who receives excellent support and challenge from a fully committed governing body. Students speak warmly of the headteacher's aspirational outlook and view him as a powerful motivating force. They

are right to do so. He is very ably supported by a cohesive senior leadership team who consistently deliver the school's vision. Their resilience is a key factor in the school's success. The way in which the senior leadership team monitor students' progress is particularly impressive and is a significant tool for supporting middle leaders in driving up standards.

The quality of middle leadership is developing well. There are examples of outstanding practice: particularly the development of the science curriculum, literacy both in the English department and across the school, and the work to support those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Middle leaders are not fully involved in evaluating the work of the school and could do more, for example, to ensure that students are more effectively informed about how to improve their work.

Governors, senior leaders and middle managers all share the same high aspirations for the students and work hard in exceptionally challenging circumstances. The school is very well placed to build on the hard won improvements since the last inspection and has clearly demonstrated outstanding capacity to improve further.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Phoenix High School, London, W12 0RQ

Thank you very much for talking to us so openly and honestly when we recently inspected your school. I am writing to let you know what we found; if you want to read the whole report you can download it from [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

We agree with you: The Phoenix is an outstanding school. Only a few schools in the country are judged by Ofsted to be outstanding so I am sure that you and your family will feel really proud of belonging to the Phoenix community. You told us how much you respected your headteacher and how motivating and inspirational you thought he was. Just as importantly you told us how caring all your teachers were and how you felt that they were always there to help you during school, after school and at weekends. But they do not just look after you; they prepare you for life after school by ensuring that you get really good grades in your exams.

So congratulations to you and your teachers on all your hard work! Of course, as your teachers are very aware, there is always more to do. One thing that some of you need to do is to improve your attendance; you cannot take advantage of all the positive things at the Phoenix if you are not there. We have also asked the school to improve in two areas:

- You told us that you wanted to be more actively involved in your own learning in some classes.
- Although you know your levels you do not always know what you need to do improve your learning.

The teachers will be working on this and I know that you will do your best to support them and to make sure there are further improvements.

With very best wishes

Michael Lynes

Her Majesty's Inspector