

# Phoenix School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100987
<b>Local Authority</b>	Tower Hamlets
<b>Inspection number</b>	307553
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stuart Charlton

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	102
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	2
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Nicky Schroeder
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stewart Harris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 May 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	49 Bow Road London E3 2AD
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8980 4740
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8980 6342

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<b>Age group</b>	2–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Phoenix is a special school providing education for pupils who are on the autistic spectrum. All have a statement of special educational need related to significant communication and interaction difficulties. The majority also have severe learning difficulties. Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Nearly half are from families of Bangladeshi origin and the majority speak English as an additional language. Most pupils live within the Borough of Tower Hamlets, but a small number come from neighbouring Local Authorities (LA). About three quarters of the pupils are entitled to a free school meal. The school has Specialist Special School status in Communication and Interaction. The school offers a range of activities through an After School Club on evenings each week for pupils aged 2 to 16. There are two pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Phoenix School is outstanding. Pupils' achievements are excellent and this is a direct result of outstanding teaching and learning. Key to this is the time and effort which are put in to ensuring that all staff focus on developing pupils' communication and interaction skills in every way they can. Strong and determined leadership and management have enabled the school to move forward very successfully from the position seen at the last inspection. The achievement of the vast majority of pupils is excellent. Pupils' personal development is excellent because of the support and guidance that all staff give to this aspect of learning. A significant factor in the success of the school is the way in which staff challenge pupils to make the right choices in all they do at school. The school is held in high regard by pupils and their parents. As one parent commented, 'Phoenix is an excellent school and I want my child to stay there as long as he can.'

The headteacher has a very clear vision of how the school should develop. He is ably supported by his senior leadership team and governors. They have established a caring and supportive ethos that contributes significantly to raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence. There are very strong systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision so that managers are fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they have drawn up a comprehensive improvement plan. There are excellent systems to monitor and develop teaching and learning. These are used extremely well to ensure that all staff receive regular training about how to manage the learning of pupils with autism. This ensures that staff new to the school quickly develop the expertise and confidence to slot into the team structure. Across the school, teachers' planning has a clear focus on the needs of individuals, based on the challenging targets that are set for pupils' personal and academic development. However, the ways in which the information about pupils' progress is presented to parents, governors and other stakeholders gives a too modest view of how successful the school is in enabling all its pupils to make excellent progress. Teachers and support staff make it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve in all the subjects they study. The professionalism and commitment of the support staff play a significant part in helping all pupils to achieve of their best. The curriculum is excellent with a very wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, particularly through out-of-school activities, including the After School Club. Throughout the school, a very strong emphasis is placed on physical education, which is highly valued by pupils. The school uses information communication technology (ICT) extremely well to enhance learning. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and the attendance of the majority of pupils is well above the expected level. Most pupils have excellent attitudes to learning.

The headteacher and senior team have established a very effective team structure and given all staff a real sense of purpose. These are the cornerstones for the excellent relationships that have been built up with external agencies such as the Local Authority (LA) Children's Services and other schools and colleges. The school's work is highly valued by the LA and has led to it being responsible for the Authority's Outreach Service. These links have been used very well to enhance the professional development of the school's staff and extend the range of their experience. Middle managers support their subjects very well and link extremely effectively with their senior managers to ensure that staff are clear about what is expected of them and their pupils. The governing body is very strong. It supports the school well and acts very effectively as its critical friend. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their safety are robust. The school makes extremely good use of its specialist status by providing

schools across the LA with the skills and expertise they need to support pupils with autism in mainstream settings. The school's work to promote community cohesion is outstanding. It supports parents, whose children are diagnosed with autism, across the LA and works very effectively with the wider business and commercial community, promoting and enhancing the profile of pupils with autism. By significantly improving the quality of education seen at the last inspection, the school has clearly demonstrated that it has excellent capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

The school ensures that all staff working in this area quickly develop the skills needed to support the learning of children with autism. Consequently, achievement is outstanding because of excellent teaching. The arrangements to introduce young children to the school are very effective. These are based on two induction sessions prior to entry which involve parents and are linked to home visits, as well as comprehensive assessment of the child's needs. This ensures that children settle very quickly and develop the daily routines and independence that are the cornerstones for their future learning. A particular feature of the work of the EYFS is the consistent use of pictorial signing to enable children to communicate with others and begin to interact with their environment. The leadership of the EYFS is very effective. The coordinator and his senior management link have established very effective assessment systems and tracking which fully meet the needs of the new EYFS curriculum.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that the way in which pupils' progress is reported is more motivating by making the school's success clearer to pupils, parents and other stakeholders.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Across the school, the majority of pupils make excellent progress and achieve highly given their very low attainment on entry. In a EYFS/Key Stage 1 class, in the space of a few weeks, teachers have established with the children the routines they need to provide a context for learning. Older pupils showed great confidence in communicating their ideas and feelings in Key Stage 2/3 English and drama lessons. The school has rigorous and robust systems to track pupils' progress across the school. These are used extremely well to show the small, but critical, steps in their learning and ensure that activities are very carefully adapted to the needs of pupils. By the time they leave, pupils gain a wide range of nationally recognised qualifications which are a very good preparation for life after school. Dependent on their needs and aspirations, they are able to gain a wide range of Entry Level and vocational qualifications, including Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications.

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

### **Grade: 1**

All staff respect each pupil's dignity and, consequently, ensure that the personal development of all is outstanding. All pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and the majority have very good attendance rates. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is exemplary because of the consistent application of the behaviour policy by staff and the excellent role models that they provide. Pupils are very aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle and all take full advantage

of the sports clubs that are part of the Wednesday afternoon enrichment sessions. These good habits are endorsed fully in lessons. The School Council plays an important role in the life of the school and is actively involved in decision-making. Many of the older pupils make a difference to their school community by acting as mentors and advocates for their younger peers. In all their activities, pupils pay particular attention to acting safely. They feel safe and secure and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is excellent. There are excellent opportunities for all pupils to develop work-based skills through the horticulture lessons, which are part of the curriculum across the school, and through the regular work placements for older learners.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Through a very focussed programme of training, all staff are able to gain the skills and confidence they need to address the extremely wide range and diversity of pupils' needs. The speech therapists work very closely with staff to ensure that all pupils gain the communication and interaction skills that are critical to their development. This is reflected in the consistently thorough planning that has a clear focus on the needs of individuals and how these will be met. Regular and rigorous assessment by staff, linked to very effective self and peer assessment with older pupils, ensures that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils are the bedrock for the very successful learning that results. Teachers are particularly well supported by the support assistants and this ensures that pupils quickly develop the self-esteem and confidence they need to succeed. This teamwork is much appreciated by pupils. In the words of one of the older pupils, 'everyone helps us a lot.'

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

Since the last inspection all areas of the curriculum have been significantly improved. The provision for younger pupils has been matched carefully to the new EYFS curriculum. Planning in Key Stages 1 and 2 fully reflects national guidelines and incorporates activities that are extremely well matched to the needs of autistic pupils. The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 has been developed, improved and adapted. It now provides an excellent balance of academic, vocational and work-related opportunities that are very well matched to the needs and aspirations of these pupils. Consequently, across the school there are excellent opportunities for all pupils to develop the skills they will need in the future. A very wide range of accreditation is available and this is supplemented very effectively by opportunities at the local college and through work experience and placements.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and have a significant impact on pupils' excellent personal and academic development. Central to its success is the commitment and time that all staff devote to the personal mentoring system. The school provides a safe and secure environment that enables all pupils to face the challenges of school life successfully. The school is a very harmonious community with little or no bullying and there have been no exclusions in the last two years. Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements. A particular feature of

this area of the school's work is how quickly all newcomers across the school settle into routines, which are crucial to their future success. The excellent support that all staff give to helping pupils ensures that they always meet and very often exceed the targets set in their personal education plans.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The leadership and vision of the headteacher are outstanding and have been central in ensuring that the school has continued to improve on the standards seen at the last inspection. The stability in the senior management team, linked to the energy and enthusiasm it generates, ensures that the school continues to improve rapidly. This is particularly noticeable in the changes that have been made to all aspects of the accommodation and environment, to enhance pupils' experience and stimulate their learning. The schools' specialism has been used extremely well to improve pupils' learning. Governance has improved significantly and is now excellent. Governors play an active role in the life of the school and challenge it very effectively. The effort and resources invested in developing the skills of staff have paid dividends in ensuring that all have the skills to work successfully with pupils with autism. Since the last inspection, the senior team has put a great deal of effort into developing its assessment and tracking systems. This has enabled it to set more realistic and challenging targets that ensure all pupils achieve of their best. The success of the school is reflected in the initiative to establish a sixth form, which will open in 2011.

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**Annex A**

## 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

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
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?	1

## 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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

## Annex B

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

16 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Phoenix School, London, E3 2AD

Thank you for the help that you gave me when I came to inspect your school. I enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. I was very pleased to be invited to a meeting of the School Council. Your behaviour is excellent and I know that you like coming to school very much. You also like to keep healthy by playing games with your friends and relaxing in the Yoga sessions in class. You told me that all the staff will help you and that you like nearly all your lessons.

All of the staff are working very hard to help you learn as much as you can. Even though Phoenix School is excellent, I know that they have more plans to make it even better. One way will be to make sure that you and your friends know just how well your school is doing.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Charlton

Lead Inspector