

# The Phoenix School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134227
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	328858
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Jones 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>	Special
<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 (total)	53
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Rose
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr William Bush
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Great North Road Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 7UF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01476 574112
<b>Fax number</b>	01476 579307

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- progress made by pupils taking into account their age, starting points and time at the school
- provision for, and achievement of, the very small numbers of girls, looked after children and minority ethnic pupils
- the contribution of the school to community cohesion and the extent to which the school prepares pupils for life in a diverse society.

Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation; achievement and attainment information; observation of lessons; scrutiny of documentation provided by the school; observation of the school at work; discussions with senior managers, governors and pupils; and an analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school opened in 2003. All the pupils have statements of special educational needs relating to emotional and behavioural difficulties, many have associated complex medical and learning difficulties. Almost all the pupils who attend the school come from White British backgrounds and there are currently just two girls on roll. Pupils' backgrounds are varied, although most experience significant social and economic disadvantage. The school provides pupils with extra activities in its extended day from Monday to Thursday each school week.

The school gained Specialist school status in September 2008. The school has achieved Career Mark, Healthy Schools status, the International School award and Sports mark and is a recognised Eco-school and Duke of Edinburgh centre.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with several outstanding features. It has made many improvements since the last inspection and has achieved specialist status as a special school. Excellent links have been made with a range of partners to bring about improvement in provision for pupils. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher who has created a harmonious, family community, where pupils feel settled and happy. As one pupil commented, 'Coming to this school is the best thing that has ever happened to me.'

Achievement is good. From starting points which are well below average, and very disrupted previous educational histories, pupils make good progress and achieve a variety of qualifications from entry level certificates, vocational qualifications and GCSEs. However, standards remain well below the national average because of the nature of the pupils' difficulties and disabilities. The very few girls in the school and the group of looked after pupils make equally good progress as other pupils. Pupils who are falling behind in their work are quickly identified and given extra support. However, pupils who are more able are not always given the level of challenge they require.

Personal development is outstanding. Social, moral and cultural development is excellent but opportunities are sometimes missed to raise pupils' spiritual awareness. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and their attendance is excellent. Pupils were worried that the school might be closed because of the snow during the inspection and they would miss their lessons. Behaviour is outstanding because pupils are treated with respect and kindness and they, in turn, treat others in the same way. They are aware of the different types of bullying and are taught why these are not acceptable. They learn to treat other people with tolerance and are well prepared for life in a diverse society. Pupils have very good knowledge and understanding about how to keep safe and healthy. The vast majority participate enthusiastically in the wide range of physical activities, educational visits, residential opportunities and foreign visits provided by the school in the extended day and out of school time. An active school council means that pupils participate in making decisions, such as improving the quality of school meals, and they feel their views are taken seriously. They contribute well to the wider community by, for example, raising money for charity and successfully completing work experience placements. Pupils feel well prepared for the world of work through a good careers education programme and good links with the Connexions service.

The quality of teaching is good and several outstanding lessons were observed. Behaviour management techniques are exemplary and relationships are built on trust, consistency and high expectations. Teachers make very effective use of high quality resources and information communication technology (ICT). In the best lessons pupils are encouraged to be self-motivated and self-disciplined. For example in a Year 10 art lesson, pupils were working independently on their own projects. The teacher had guided them in arriving at their own original ideas and provided a relaxed but working atmosphere, where they could all concentrate and produce their best work. Attractive displays of pupils' own work and professional artwork around the school help to create a stimulating learning environment. In a few lessons, there is a lack of challenge for more able pupils and insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills. Support staff are not always used to support learning effectively and their presence sometimes reduces the opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour and learning. Teaching does not consistently reinforce literacy, numeracy and computer skills across the school.

The curriculum provided by the school is outstanding because it is tailored to meet the needs of each pupil. Pupils are taught in very small groups so that individual needs can be met. Older pupils attend relevant courses at a local college and have access to an extensive range of work placements. Withdrawal groups help to boost the performance of those falling behind. There is good emphasis on the arts and physical activity to allow pupils opportunities to express their emotions. The range of extra-curricular activities is outstanding and is funded by the school so that no pupils are disadvantaged. Participation for all pupils in the extended day has been made possible because the school has bravely made the decision to run its own transport services and employs its own drivers, who also act as support workers. This has a positive social impact because the pupils know their drivers and the journeys have become an important part of their social education.

The school is a very caring and inclusive community where pupils feel safe and secure. Staff are committed and dedicated. Parents echo this view. They are overwhelmingly positive in their support of the school and many comment about the excellent level of care their children receive. As one parent remarked, 'The school combines a firm structure and best practice with good humour and common sense. Communication with the home is superb and a key element of the school's success.'

Effective systems are in place to track personal development, behaviour and academic progress. The school makes outstanding use of a range of multi-agency working to gain access to individual support for every pupil who needs it. An outstanding feature is the behaviour reward system where pupils can amass credit points and then have a wide range of choices in the after school activities in the extended day. This proves to be a real incentive for pupils to behave well. Pupils are well cared for and this is contributing to their desire to succeed. They are able to recognize the progress they are making.

Leadership and management are good. Leadership by the headteacher is energetic and dynamic and has had a real impact on outcomes as in, for example, the decision to take over the transport services. There is an excellent team spirit among the staff and governors who want to do their best to help pupils succeed. Clear line management systems are in place and monitoring and self-evaluation are accurate. However, middle managers do not take on sufficient responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of whole school initiatives such as literacy and numeracy strategies across the school. The school makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion by socialising pupils into their own community, developing outreach work with the local authority, training staff at local colleges and schools in behaviour management, and making pupils aware of their role as global citizens. The school provides good value for money. Finances are managed efficiently and purposefully to benefit pupils and the school gained the Financial Management certificate in 2008. However, the deployment of support staff during lesson time is not always as effective as it could be. The school has the capacity and the staff to become outstanding and is certainly going in the right direction.

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

- Raise achievement by ensuring the right level of challenge for more able pupils and implementing and monitoring literacy, numeracy and ICT strategies across the whole school.
- Make more effective use of support staff in lessons to help pupils develop independent learning skills.

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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?	2
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?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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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	2
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	1
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	2

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

5 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of the Phoenix School, Grantham, NG31 7US

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 4 February. We enjoyed talking with you. The Phoenix School is a good school with several outstanding features. We thought you would like to know what was so good about your school.

- The school is very well led by the headteacher and there is an excellent team spirit among the staff and governors, who want you all to do your very best.
- You are very happy in school and really enjoy your lessons; most of you come to school every day, behave very well and are kind to each other.
- You are making excellent progress in the development of social skills and good progress in your schoolwork.
- You like and respect your teachers and support workers and work hard for them.
- You enjoy the outstanding range of activities provided for you in and out of school hours.
- You told us that you feel safe in school and are well looked after. There is excellent care and support for all of you.
- Older students have an excellent choice of courses and work placements and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

How we thought it could get even better.

- Some of you could be given more difficult work to do and all of you could do more reading, writing and number skills in all your lessons.
- Support workers could help you to learn things more independently.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector