

Phoenix Primary EBD School

Odell Road, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 2ED

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders have a clear focus on creating a school where pupils are able to overcome their emotional and behavioural problems, and focus on learning.
- All pupils display extremely difficult behaviour when they first arrive. They quickly begin to develop much more positive attitudes, so behaviour overall is good. It enables pupils to make good progress in learning.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In particular, it helps pupils to develop their social skills, learning to share, collaborate and help each other. It helps prepare pupils to become positive members of modern British society.
- Teaching is good because teachers have high expectations. This is a major reason why pupils are able to do well. Staff show a strong commitment to the school and its pupils.
- Staff have opportunities to develop their specialist skills in working with difficult pupils. As a result, they develop good expertise, which, in turn, is maintaining standards.
- Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Those who are more able often make rapid progress, reaching standards above those expected for pupils of their age.
- Learning in lessons is increasingly topic based, seeking to interest and involve most pupils. Pupils usually respond positively and work hard in lessons.
- There have been a lot of changes in staffing, but the focus on ensuring that pupils are supported to do their best has been maintained.
- There have also been changes to the governing body, but experienced governors remain committed to ensuring continuity, effective teaching and good links with parents.
- Pupils and their parents believe that this is a safe and caring place where pupils can thrive in a happy atmosphere. The school looks after its pupils well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Systems to check upon the 'small steps' pupils make in developing writing skills are not fully effective.
- Pupils do not always know how to improve their work using their learning targets in lessons.
- Not all topics planned motivate pupils to learn well and, particularly, use their writing skills in different subjects.
- Opportunities to help staff teach writing effectively have been too few.

Information about this inspection

- Six lessons were observed, covering every class. They were undertaken jointly with either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, the family intervention team, the behaviour support worker, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's on-line Parent View survey to trigger an analysis. Instead, parents' views were gathered from the school's own recent survey.
- The views of staff were gathered from their responses to their own questionnaire and from discussions held throughout the inspection.
- Pupils' views were gathered from a meeting with representative pupils and from talking to as many of them as possible throughout the inspection.
- Pupils' work was looked at during lessons and a more detailed scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work from across the school was undertaken. Case studies of specific pupils were undertaken and some pupils read to the inspector.
- A range of written information was looked at, including information on the progress of pupils, teachers' planning and marking, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, as well as a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a special school for pupils between the ages of five and 11 who have behavioural, emotional and social disabilities, often with other associated learning difficulties. These include autistic spectrum disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disability.
- The vast majority of pupils over time have been in Key Stage 2. The occasional Key Stage 1 pupil has been accommodated in a Key Stage 2 group. This year, however, there are three Year 1 pupils in a dedicated Key Stage 1 class. In September 2013 the school had its largest ever number of pupils, the first time the school had ever been full at the start of the school year.
- The proportion of pupils who qualify for the pupil premium is above average, making up the majority of the 25 pupils who are in school. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority. They are often referred to as disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average, reflecting the composition of the local authority. None currently speak English as an additional language.
- The headteacher was appointed in April 2013. In her first full year some staff were absent for various reasons, including long-term illness, maternity leave and retirement. Those on extended leave included two of the three members of the senior leadership team. These periods of leave have now ended and the school is back to full strength.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure there is a focus on raising the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by:
 - helping all teachers give effective advice to pupils on how their learning targets can help them improve their learning
 - ensuring topics always interest and engage pupils' learning, while also providing opportunities to write at length to practise their skills.
- Raise standards in writing to those already found in reading and mathematics by:
 - developing the way in which progress in writing is checked so that teachers know the current levels of their pupils' abilities and can challenge pupils to develop further
 - ensuring that senior leaders use their expertise in the teaching of writing to support and develop the skills and confidence of other staff.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders are focused on maintaining the high standards established in the school over recent years. This is a school where pupils come to learn, whatever the difficulties they have faced in their previous education. There is an expectation that pupils will be supported so that in the very small setting of the Phoenix School they can experience success.
- Staff are all strongly committed to this vision. Overwhelmingly, they express their pride in working at the school. Everyone takes specific responsibilities for leading subject areas, which help develop a positive team spirit. Teaching is typically good, although systems to monitor pupils' small steps of progress are not yet always fully effective in writing.
- Pupils are also supported by the strong links that are developed with other professionals within education, health and social services. For example, links with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service support pupils' wider emotional and behavioural needs, while family support comes through close collaboration with social workers.
- Family support is strong, with dedicated workers seeking to develop positive engagement with the school. A recent session for parents on the dangers of the misuse of the internet is one example. Teachers send a sheet home every day that sets out how well their child has done through the day.
- There are appropriate systems in place to monitor the performance of staff. Last year there were a number of long-term staff absences and it was not always possible to check how well subjects were being taught. As a consequence, standards dipped, particularly in writing.
- Checks by senior staff now provide clear evidence of effective teaching and where some weaknesses exist. Senior leaders have not always supported staff who may be less confident, particularly in the teaching of writing skills. Teachers have challenging annual targets linked to pupils' achievement and progress.
- Teaching has a clear focus on developing basic skills for learning; however, pupils' writing skills currently lag behind those in reading and mathematics. The other subjects in the National Curriculum are starting to be covered through a topic-based approach to interest and challenge pupils. However, some topics chosen do not yet motivate all pupils or give them opportunities to write at length to practise their writing skills.
- A lot of work has been done to prepare the school for measuring pupils' progress in a different way now that National Curriculum levels are disappearing. A new process is being rolled out, first in English, mathematics, and then to all other subjects. This is already starting to enhance the school's detailed information on individual pupils, but is not yet fully effective across all subjects.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is provided for well. A strength is the support given to pupils to help them develop their social skills. They become far more able to accept and respect the views of others, and to share, collaborate and appreciate team work. Preparation for becoming active members of the British democratic way of life is shown in the way in which pupils are often asked to vote, in order to make preferences. They understand that all accept majority decisions.
- The additional funding to support physical education and sport is used effectively. Every week a sports coach comes to school and works with teachers, leading sessions and helping them gain confidence and expertise. This has also created more opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting activities.
- Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous, fully meeting requirements, as are the risk assessments carried out for each pupil regarding their safety around the school and on educational visits.
- The local authority provides regular and effective support, including assistance for governors. The school found this very useful during the period when it had severe staffing difficulties last year.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been significant changes to the governing body since the previous inspection, and a period when there were vacancies. Good support from the local authority has helped the school to fill the gaps, and training has helped governors to carry out all their duties and responsibilities, including those for safeguarding.
 - Governors are strongly committed to ensuring equality of opportunity as is evident in the way pupils' individual needs are identified and met. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
 - Governors challenge, yet also support, the senior leaders and they know what is going on in school because they go in and find out for themselves.
 - They use regular finance reports to keep an overview of the budget and know how the pupil premium funding is allocated. They are aware of its effectiveness and the way it is supporting pupils to accelerate their learning.
 - Governors are aware of the links between teachers' pay and performance and the procedures for

dealing with any less effective teaching. Challenging targets are set annually for the headteacher, with good support from their school improvement partner.

- Governors understand the information on pupils' progress and the impact of the school in helping to address the difficulties faced by the pupils when they first arrive.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. When they first join the school it is extremely challenging, but they quickly learn how to control their behaviour and develop much more responsible attitudes and ideas. The behaviour support worker provides strong support in the most difficult situations.
- The school's clear and effective behaviour policy is based on a combination of sanctions and rewards. Pupils say that they value this and feel it helps them focus on developing much more positive attitudes. Pupils get on well with adults, who act as positive role models. In lessons there are excellent relationships and pupils enjoy their learning. This is an important reason for their good progress. Pupils are encouraged to play a full role in supporting each other and the school.
- Pupils say that there is little bullying because they are supervised so well. Pupils say they have studied bullying in lessons and recently participated in an anti-bullying week. As part of this initiative, some pupils recently represented the school at a conference organised by the local authority. They understand that there are different types of bullying, including that based on prejudice.
- Specific work on e-safety and the use of the internet is also offered to parents so they can better support their children at home. The family intervention team works hard to involve parents in the life of the school and the education of their children.
- There are still occasional incidents of unacceptable behaviour, but staff show themselves very skilled in dealing with these so that they are quickly resolved. Care is taken to log all behaviour incidents and a computer-based system provides analysis that helps the school look for patterns and trends so that difficulties can be foreseen or avoided.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. This view is also strongly held by parents and pupils. Risk assessments are detailed and accurate, including personal risk assessments. If it is considered a risk for a pupil to participate in an activity, they will not go, a policy that pupils are happy to accept.
- Safeguarding routines and procedures are rigorous and fully meet legal requirements. All staff receive rigorous training in keeping pupils safe.
- Attendance is broadly average compared with all schools, but when compared to special schools, where pupils often have to travel a long way to school or have to attend a range of appointments out of school, it is high. This reflects pupils' enjoyment of coming to school, as do the very low exclusion rates.
- The school itself is a safe place to be. Care is taken to vet visitors, and if people are visiting the school to talk to pupils, care is taken to ensure that their messages are positive and will help the pupils develop positive attitudes.

The quality of teaching is good

- Strong teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants provides excellent support for pupils and provides a lot of individual support. This helps pupils to adopt the positive attitudes to learning.
- Teaching is generally good and it helps pupils make good progress. Teaching is more effective in reading and mathematics than writing. Standards fell last year because there were too few checks on teachers and not enough expertise available to support them.
- Teachers measure pupils' progress termly in reading and mathematics but they are less confident in checking pupils' progress in writing.
- Teachers meet senior leaders termly to review pupils' progress. Pupils who are not making enough progress are given additional support to help them catch up. The most able pupils are stretched appropriately so they can start to fulfil their learning potential.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and the best marking indicates how pupils can reach their targets. Not all teachers' marking is as good as the best.
- Staff have high expectations of their pupils and want them to do well. At the same time, they accept that they will sometimes fall short because of their wider emotional and social difficulties. When this happens

there is always another chance given to pupils to follow the school's expectations.

- Teachers and teaching assistants ask good questions during lessons. Answers show that pupils understand, but this also leads to discussions and sharing ideas. In turn, this develops the skills of working together and sharing.

The achievement of pupils is good

- When pupils join the school, their attainment is weak in many areas of learning. Staff's clear expectations of pupils ensure they make good and sometimes rapid, progress from their individual starting points.
- Topic-based learning enables pupils to practise their skills in reading and mathematics in a range of ways. This is not always the case in writing.
- Reading is a strength of the school. Phonics (the understanding of letters and the sounds they make) is used very effectively. Pupils, who often struggle when they first arrive, make rapid progress in reading and value the daily opportunities to read in class.
- Pupils' confidence to write lags behind that in reading and mathematics. Pupils do not have enough opportunity to write at length.
- When the current levels of progress are measured against national guidance for special schools, pupils make good, and sometimes rapid, progress.
- The needs of the most able pupils are met effectively. By the time they leave the school they are often working at levels above those expected for their age in English and mathematics.
- Close links with the secondary school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties ensure a smooth transition to other schools after Year 6. Whenever possible, the school works with mainstream schools to re-integrate pupils. Each year one or two pupils successfully return to mainstream education as a result of careful initial support.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to fund additional staffing. This includes an experienced teacher who provides individual support and interventions to meet pupils' specific needs. As a result, these pupils often make better progress than all pupils nationally, taking their starting points into account. There is no gap in the achievement of these pupils compared with others in school in reading, writing and mathematics. As their learning improves they start to narrow the gap with the performance of pupils nationally.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135460
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	448934

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Carter
Headteacher	Dawn Evans
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2011
Telephone number	01922 712834
Fax number	01922 493505
Email address	postbox@phoenix.walsall.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

