

Inspection of Phoenix Academy

Odell Road, Leamore, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 2ED

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Insufficient evidence**

Previous inspection grade **Good**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive at Phoenix Academy with difficult and inconsistent experiences of education. Staff understand these experiences and pupils' individual needs. They use this knowledge to foster positive relationships with pupils. Pupils are welcomed into school by a supportive staff team. As a result, pupils feel safe with their teachers. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend well.

Acceptance, belonging, regulation, respect and pride are front and centre of all that the school does. These values underpin the pastoral support offered to pupils. This helps pupils to recognise their feelings and emotions. It also empowers them to find solutions, particularly if they are feeling angry or upset.

Behaviour across the school can vary. Staff deal with any unkind behaviour or incidents of bullying quickly and effectively. Staff use individual approaches and strategies to support pupils with their behaviour. These work well. Pupils settle; their readiness for learning is increasing.

Leaders' expectations for behaviour and learning are high. These expectations are mostly met. Some pupils are experiencing success in school for the first time. Pupils have opportunities to take part in trips and activities that prepare them well for life beyond school.

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

Leaders want the best for pupils. They know what is going well and what needs to develop further. They receive effective support from the multi-academy trust and governors. This helps to improve the school. Staff say that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Leaders are passionate about providing pupils with a rounded education. They have thought about the curriculum and what they want pupils to learn and experience. They also ensure that pastoral support and interventions are in place to help pupils beyond the classroom. Staff gather a range of detailed information to understand pupils' individual starting points. Staff use this information well to create personalised plans for pupils. This helps make sure pupils get the right support to learn.

The teaching of phonics and early reading helps pupils to make progress. The approach has resulted in pupils engaging in positive learning routines. Pupils read regularly and speak positively about their experiences of reading. They are regularly assessed and appropriate support is put in place if pupils fall behind with their reading. The quad area includes a reading corner and hideaway. Pupils demonstrated excitement about accessing this new part of their school.

Pupils learn the planned curriculum well. Where the curriculum is stronger, such as in mathematics, pupils' learning is well sequenced. Pupils are able to draw on their prior knowledge in lessons to make sense of new ideas and concepts. In other subjects, such as geography, the smaller steps of learning are not as well ordered. This means that pupils are not always able to link their previous learning to current learning. This prevents them from achieving as well as they could. In addition, sometimes teachers do not use assessment as well as they should to check what pupils have understood.

Pupils make significant progress with their behaviour from their starting points. This is because leaders identify what pupils need to work on and provide appropriate support and intervention. In most lessons, pupils behave well. However, this is not always the case.

At times, pupils need time away from the classroom to manage their emotions. Pupils access the 'rainbow room' during these times. They continue some of their learning and receive extra support in this calming space. However, leaders do not consistently check what learning has happened, and pupils sometimes miss out on key learning points.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum supports pupils in learning important content for their personal development. This includes learning about relationships, as well as treating others fairly and with respect. Pupils have positive relationships with their peers, and they show kindness to each other. They speak positively about the comfort that they experience from playing with the school therapy dog, Loki.

The curriculum is enriched through various activities and trips. Pupils have been able to visit places such as local castles and places of interest. Pupils look forward to these visits. Leaders ensure that all pupils benefit from these experiences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a positive culture of safeguarding. Leaders carry out the necessary recruitment checks on staff before they start employment.

Leaders and staff receive appropriate training. Staff know the pupils well. They are alert to and understand the risks that pupils face. Staff speak confidently about safeguarding and how to report concerns. They do this promptly.

Leaders take appropriate action to keep pupils safe. They work closely with external partners and agencies to get the right help for pupils and families. Leaders ensure that the curriculum teaches pupils about how to stay safe; this includes online safety. Pupils have positive friendships and they support each other.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in some subjects is not as well developed as in others. In these subjects, the key learning for pupils has not yet been carefully sequenced. As a result, pupils' learning is not as strong as it could be. Leaders need to continue to refine the curriculum to ensure content is carefully sequenced across all subjects.
- Some aspects of teachers' assessment focus too much on endpoints rather than the small steps pupils need to master. Consequently, teachers do not always know what pupils have understood and what their next steps need to be. Leaders need to ensure assessment is used well to inform the curriculum and teachers' planning.
- Leaders' development of the behaviour policy is in the early stages of implementation. At times, some pupils find it difficult to adapt to the new policy and the raised expectations. Leaders should continue to work alongside staff and pupils to embed the new policy and realise a consistent culture of high expectations.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 143382 |
| Local authority | Walsall |
| Inspection number | 10241070 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Academy special converter |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 39 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Pat Beanland |
| Principal | Elyse Phillips |
| Website | www.phoenix.attrust.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 24 and 25 September 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Academy Transformation Trust.
- This school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not have any pupils attending in the Reception Year.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During this inspection, inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders. Inspectors also met with a wide range of staff.

- The lead inspector met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. They also met with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. They also examined leaders' approach to safer recruitment. Inspectors spoke to staff about their safeguarding knowledge and checked how well they understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and information on the school's website.
- Inspectors evaluated safeguarding, and pupils' behaviour during breaktimes, lunchtimes and while in lessons.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and PSHE.
- 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. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read.
- The lead inspector met with the school's special educational needs coordinator and those responsible for personal development and behaviour.
- The lead inspector reviewed responses to Ofsted's online parent, pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Gemma Mann, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Susan Lowry

Ofsted Inspector

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