

Phoenix Junior Academy

Glencoe Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 5QD

Inspection dates	4–5 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a rapidly improving school.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school. His high aspirations have given staff, parents and pupils a renewed sense of purpose.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good. Teachers show secure subject knowledge and use assessment information effectively to plan next steps for pupils' learning.
- Pupils make good progress, often from very low starting points. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils.
- Pupils enjoy learning and want to do their best. Effective pastoral care and support means that pupils feel safe and well cared for.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Respect and courtesy are at the heart of the positive relationships that exist across the school.
- The advisory board uses its expertise to good effect to challenge and support school leaders.
- Leaders and teachers work well with parents to support pupils' achievements and personal development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Too many pupils are regularly absent from school.
- Inconsistencies in the way reading is taught mean that some pupils, particularly lower attainers, do not read as fluently as they should.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attendance of those pupils who are regularly absent from school.
- Further develop the teaching of reading skills to ensure a consistent approach across the school, so that all pupils, particularly the least able, become fluent readers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has given much-needed stability and direction to the school since September 2015. He leads the school with determination and integrity. Staff recognise the difference he has made and trust him to make the right decisions. Working with the effective deputy headteacher, he has led rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. As one member of staff explained, 'This school is unrecognisable from what it was a year ago.'
- Leaders successfully communicate high expectations to staff, parents and pupils. This has led to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements and behaviour.
- The headteacher and advisory board have successfully steered the school through a period of rapid change, undertaking a root and branch review of policies and procedures. The school is now in a much more settled phase because routines and systems are consistently understood and used.
- Leaders and teachers frequently check how well pupils are learning. They quickly spot those who need extra help and provide effective support so pupils' progress improves.
- The monitoring of teaching has become much more effective. Outcomes of lesson observations, scrutinies of pupils' work and information about pupils' progress are fed back to staff. They have to address areas for improvement in a timely manner, including undertaking professional development to enhance their skills.
- Leaders have established clear roles and responsibilities so that staff are held accountable for pupils' progress. Rigorous performance management systems are in place for teachers and support staff.
- Effective training and sharing of expertise by subject leaders are already reaping benefits. They have conducted audits of their areas and pinpointed areas that need more attention.
- Pupil premium funding supports eligible pupils effectively because gaps are closing rapidly between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates. Leaders evaluate the impact of their support well and make swift changes when progress slows.
- Sports funding provides regular lessons and activities with specialist coaches. Pupils and staff have learned new skills. Participation in physical and competitive activities has increased and pupils are helped to follow a healthy lifestyle.
- Leaders have worked successfully to engage with parents and involve them in their children's learning. Parents appreciate the approachable and open manner of senior leaders, for example through their 'open door' policy and their presence each day at the school gates. They find the information and support they receive about pupils' learning and well-being helpful and informative.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and promotes pupils' understanding of the world and their social, moral and cultural development well. Leaders have drawn up the school's 'top 10 by 10' list of experiences they plan for every pupil to have: for example, the opportunity to hear a live orchestra play and a visit to a grammar school. Consequently, pupils' horizons are being broadened and their aspirations raised through experiences provided across the curriculum and through a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The school works hard to uphold the values it promotes and adults model these well. As a result, pupils are respectful and accepting of others and they understand why these attitudes are important. Pupils recently experienced the process of democracy when those seeking election to the 'values committee' (the pupil council), presented their manifestos to the whole school, produced promotional videos for their campaigns and made presentations to their classmates.
- The executive headteacher provided by the Fort Pitt Thomas Aveling Academy Trust gives ongoing, valuable support and challenge to school leaders. He provides an effective 'critical voice' to check the judgements leaders make about the school. The trust has learned from its past mistakes. As a result, it has many more robust practices in place to challenge and check what it is told by school leaders. For example, the formation of a well-being committee ensures that staff, parents and pupils have open access to the trust, where they can raise any concerns.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The quality of governance is good. The appointment of new members to the advisory board has brought a wealth of relevant skills and experience that is used to good effect. Members of the advisory board hold senior leaders to account robustly because they have a well-informed view of how well the school is doing. They are not prepared to accept what they are told without evidence, but check and challenge the information they are given.

- Members of the advisory board know how additional funding is spent and the difference it makes to pupils. They ensure that pupils are provided with equality of access to additional curriculum. The headteacher’s comprehensive reports ensure that members know about the quality of teaching in the school and about what needs to be developed further.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders place a high priority on the safety of pupils and have efficient systems and procedures in place to ensure this, as well as tackling issues quickly before they escalate further. The school work proactively with external agencies to teach pupils how to stay safe and to raise awareness.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Inspection evidence and school records show that the quality of teaching has risen rapidly in the last year and is now consistently good. Consequently, pupils are making good progress and attainment is rising.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils. They plan work effectively to build on pupils’ prior learning and make them think hard. The most able pupils said they frequently found work challenging because they were often required to apply their learning to more demanding and unfamiliar problems or situations.
- Teachers’ subject knowledge is good and they use this in confident and imaginative ways to ensure that pupils are motivated to learn. Teachers enjoy teaching and their enthusiasm is infectious.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to provide skilful support and make a valuable contribution to pupils’ good progress, especially those pupils who may be vulnerable or who need extra help with their learning.
- The school has introduced comprehensive systems for assessing and monitoring pupils’ progress. Staff carefully analyse what pupils know and can do, and address effectively any gaps in pupils’ understanding. Staff use links with local schools to compare and check the accuracy of assessments they make of pupils’ work.
- Teachers develop pupils’ writing skills well and pupils write at length in a variety of styles across different subjects. For example, pupils’ art books showed them writing reflective and critical pieces about their own work.
- While pupils generally make good progress in reading, inconsistencies in the way reading skills are taught across the school mean that some pupils, especially lower-attaining pupils, do not read as fluently as they should. Leaders know this aspect of teaching needs strengthening.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. The curriculum has a good balance between opportunities for pupils to learn and practise new concepts and then apply them to solve real-life problems. Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively to test and challenge pupils’ mathematical thinking and to tackle any misconceptions.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability receive well-targeted help and guidance. Adults build up pupils’ basic skills and confidence quickly through sensitive and precise support.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils develop and grow as confident, polite and welcoming individuals in the school’s calm, inclusive environment. They are keen to take on the many opportunities for extra responsibility and to make a positive contribution to the school community, for example as prefects or sports captains.
- The school’s core values, for example trust and tolerance, are woven through all aspects of school life. These values are frequently referred to during lessons to encourage pupils to reflect on their behaviour and its impact on others. Pupils embody these values in the mature way they conduct themselves and the respect they show for each other and staff. As a result, pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and value diversity.
- The most able pupils told the inspector that aiming high and trying to do well at school were aspirations that were encouraged and rewarded, and would not be made fun of by other pupils. Pupils speak articulately about their learning and recognise the value of their work.

- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet, because this is addressed effectively through the curriculum. They know about different forms of bullying, including racist or homophobic language, but say that bullying in school is rare and any incidents that occur are dealt with quickly and sensitively by staff.
- Support staff, for example the learning mentor and family liaison officer, provide valuable help for pupils and their families who find themselves in more challenging circumstances. This ensures that these pupils can participate fully and progress as well as their classmates.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is reflected in their conduct around the school and in the playground, and in the positive attitudes to learning they display in class. Positive relationships based on mutual respect exist between staff and pupils.
- Pupils and staff talk about the significant improvements in behaviour that they have seen. The consistent application of the school's behaviour policy means that pupils know what is expected of them, how good behaviour will be recognised and what the consequences will be if they behave poorly. Consequently, the number of fixed-term exclusions has dramatically reduced to a low level and lessons are rarely interrupted by poor behaviour.
- The school's determined work with parents to promote and encourage good attendance is paying off because attendance is improving and is currently broadly in line with the national average. However, the number of pupils who miss school regularly, while reducing, remains above national figures.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- No national curriculum test results are available for Year 6 in 2015. Teachers' assessments for 2015 show that at the end of key stage 2, pupils' attainment and progress were below average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Current assessment information and work in pupils' books show that they now make good progress from their starting points, which are often well below those expected for their age. The majority of pupils are working at or above the levels of competency expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' confidence and skills in writing have grown rapidly since September 2015. Pupils write with accuracy and imagination in a range of styles. Many pupils enjoy mathematics and are adept at applying what they know to solve problems that are unfamiliar.
- Pupils' current work across the school shows high levels of achievement across subjects other than English and mathematics. Written work in history, geography and science is of a good standard, with pupils working in line with expected standards for their age.
- Leaders have worked hard to improve standards in reading and this is bearing fruit across the school. Nevertheless, inconsistencies in teaching mean that some pupils, particularly the least able, do not read books at the appropriate level to ensure that they become fluent readers.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because leaders ensure that the support they receive is of high quality and makes a difference. Leaders closely check the impact of this additional help and adjust it to ensure that pupils reach their potential.
- The most able pupils are challenged because work is closely matched to their needs and it helps them to think more deeply and critically, and apply what they know in a range of ways. Work in books and observations in lessons evidence the good progress they make in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, the most able pupils write at length and use a range of complex sentences enriched by stimulating vocabulary.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are well supported and make good progress. Staff give these pupils skilful support that is adjusted to meet their needs and abilities.
- Pupils are well prepared for their transition to secondary school through induction visits and preparation sessions.

School details

Unique reference number	138510
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10012333

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The advisory board
Chair	Denise Ford
Headteacher	Peter Sears
Telephone number	01634 829009
Website	www.phoenixjuniors.co.uk
Email address	office@phoenixjuniors.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 May 2014

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special education needs or disability is in line with the national average.
- No national curriculum test results are available for Year 6 pupils for 2015. It is not possible to say if the school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in care) is much higher than the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A range of minority ethnic groups is represented including those from African and 'Any other White' backgrounds.
- A quarter of pupils have English as an additional language. This is above the national average.
- The deputy headteacher was appointed as the substantive headteacher in April 2016. He was the acting headteacher between September 2015 and April 2016.
- There is an executive headteacher for the school provided by the trust.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.
- The school's website meets the requirements for the publication of specific information.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including safeguarding procedures, minutes of advisory board meetings, records of attendance and behavioural incidents, information about pupils' achievement and checks by the school on how well it is doing.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, members of the advisory board and representatives of the Fort Pitt Thomas Aveling Academy Trust.
- Inspectors met with three different groups of pupils. Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons and around the school at breaktimes.
- A range of pupils' books was analysed to gather evidence about their achievement. Inspectors heard some pupils from each year group read.
- An inspector observed the breakfast club and two extra-curricular activities.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day and at a parents' meeting.
- Inspectors considered 30 responses to the staff questionnaire, 11 responses to Parent View and responses to the school's own parental survey.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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