

Phoenix School Cambridge

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Julie Winyard

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

The Phoenix School was established in 2010 after the closure of St Colette's Preparatory School. It is situated in a large rural village very close to the city of Cambridge. The school provides for children in the age range three to seven years. There are currently 19 pupils on roll of whom seven attend part-time aged between three and six. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. There are 11 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are 10 children eligible for three and four year old funding.

More than half the school's pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The school aims to provide *'a secure, loving and stimulating environment where children are encouraged to discover and achieve their full potential.'* This is the school's first published Ofsted report.

Evaluation of the school

The Phoenix School provides a good quality of education and is successful in implementing its aims. As a result of the good teaching, assessment and curriculum pupils make good progress in their learning. The school's provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and safeguarding processes and procedures are exceptionally robust. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as is their behaviour. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. The school provides a good breakfast and after-school club. The school meets all the regulations. The school's request for a material change to increase the pupil roll to 120 is recommended.

Quality of education

The school's good curriculum is based on the National Curriculum and all subjects have schemes of work including short and medium terms plans. Daily lesson plans with clear learning objectives are written for every lesson. While the schemes of work are in place, some are not as effective as others. The best schemes include clear assessment criteria with some written in language the children can understand.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

A wide range of subjects is taught including history, geography, art and design and information and communications technology. Science is taught weekly and the pupils have a good understanding of key concepts for example how plants grow, as a result of the good opportunities the dedicated garden area offers. Physical education has good coverage because the school employs specialist dance and football instructors. A strength of the school is provision for pupils learning a modern foreign language. Both French and Mandarin are currently offered and taught by specialist teachers. The curriculum is enriched with interesting educational visits. For example during the inspection, Year 1 pupils visited a Victorian school museum. They returned to school full of excitement about all they had learnt. One girl exclaimed, 'There is such a lot to tell mummy!' There is a good range of lunchtime and after school clubs including sewing, computer and football. The breakfast and after school provision is good, providing interesting and enjoyable activities for pupils including indoor and outdoor games. The proposed material change requires the school to extend their curriculum to Years 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 over a five year period. The school's curriculum policy and schemes of work include appropriate provision for these additional year groups.

Teaching and assessment are good overall and as a result of this and the good curriculum all pupils make good progress. This is evident from looking at pupils' work from the start of the school year and also from their response to the teaching during lessons. For example the day after their Victorian experience the teacher skilfully used digital photographs to remind pupils about what they had seen. Pupils clearly loved seeing themselves in role and were able to recall the day in great detail. The teacher taught pupils how to organise their ideas into paragraphs. This was the first time this concept had been introduced and because of the teacher's excellent explanations and the support given to pupils during the lesson, they all wrote a considerable amount and were able to organise their ideas effectively. While support and feedback during lessons is good, this is not always reflected in the written feedback in pupils' books. Teachers' comments are supportive but do not give pupils a clear idea of exactly why they have done well or precisely what they need to do to improve their work. As a result of this, pupils sometimes lack confidence in their ability and become over-dependent on adult support.

The school has a system in place to assess pupils' learning however this is not used as effectively as it could be to demonstrate exactly how well pupils have progressed from their starting points. There are currently no pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, however, the school has good systems in place should this be the case. Teaching assistants give good support to pupils during lessons. Teaching, assessment and the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding resulting in outstanding outcomes for all children.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes towards school and their enthusiasm for learning in every lesson is enormous. They say how much they love everything about their school. Parents are very pleased with the school and with how well settled and

happy their children are. As one parent explained, 'He is so happy here and has learnt so much in such a short space of time. He always arrives and leaves the school with a huge smile on his face!' This very positive attitude and the excellent relationships with all staff result in pupils' outstanding behaviour. One pupil said, 'I like it here because everyone behaves so well.' Pupils' spiritual development is evident in their ability to reflect on their learning; in their enjoyment of every minute of the school day and their high level of appreciation for all the adults who work with them. For example after lunch they gave a huge cheer for the school chef as she produced a delicious dessert for them. Pupils' excellent moral and social development is evident in how well they work and play together. Their cultural development is outstanding because the school is a truly multicultural community where pupils from many different countries and cultures come together. Home languages are greatly valued by the school so pupils do not feel awkward if they only know, for example, the Russian word for a particular object. The school celebrates many different festivals and parents are invited to talk about their cultural heritage which enhances pupils' appreciation of the many different cultures represented in the school.

Pupils are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the school community through special responsibilities, for example looking after younger pupils. Because the school has recently moved to its new premises there has not been time to establish links with the wider community but this is in hand. Because of their good skills and knowledge in literacy and numeracy and their good progress pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school has put in place outstanding measures to promote the welfare, health and safety of the pupils, including child protection. All safeguarding policies and procedures, including appropriate staff recruitment and pre-appointment checks, are fully in place and meet requirements. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live healthily. This is supported by the outstanding contribution of the school chef who discusses healthy food choices with the pupils enabling them to try many different foods. For example during the inspection papaya was on the menu. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to live a healthy lifestyle and say their parents also help them to do this. One child explained that although she did not know exactly why vitamins were good for you, a scientist would and both her parents are scientists. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that there is no bullying.

The school has an effective plan to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended, and this is reviewed annually. The school is making every effort to ensure that it is fully accessible to all pupils and parents. The specific welfare requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are also met. Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is included within the five year plan for the expansion of the school.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Robust systems and procedures for appointing staff are in place, in line with requirements. The necessary checks have been carried out on the proprietor, staff and volunteers working in the school and these are correctly recorded on a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's premises and accommodation enable pupils to learn effectively, safely and securely. Classrooms are of an adequate size for the number of pupils being taught. The decoration and furnishings are of excellent quality. Regarding the material change, the building designated to accommodate the expansion of the school is in excellent condition both structurally and in terms of internal decoration. Some adaptation would be required as the previous use of the building was as a hotel. The school has the skills and expertise within the governors and the parent body to draw up the necessary plans. The governors have drawn up a five year plan for the conversion of the building. There are no plans to accommodate boarders.

Provision of information

A comprehensive prospectus includes all the information for parents required by the regulations. It informs parents and prospective parents about the work of the school and is readily accessible to all, both in hard copy and on the website.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

There are good procedures for handling complaints which meet requirements and parents are informed about these in the school prospectus and on the website.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding and children make outstanding progress. The promotion of children's welfare, health and safety, including child protection and safeguarding, is outstanding, as it is in the rest of the school. Children receive a very high standard of care from dedicated and well-trained staff. Children of all ages quickly settle in, separating from their parents without fear and rapidly becoming familiar with daily routines. Behaviour is outstanding. Children quickly develop excellent speaking and good listening skills because they are given lots of opportunities to share their ideas. They demonstrate a high level of independence in the choices of activity they make.

The quality of provision is outstanding and well-qualified teaching assistants provide excellent support to teachers. Teaching is outstanding because sessions are carefully planned and there is very careful assessment of the progress children make. Observations are detailed and very well recorded in 'learning journeys' that include photographs to illustrate achievements and the next steps in learning. There are a

good range of resources for children to use both in the classroom and the outside area, which is used well throughout the day and in all weathers.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. There are excellent links with parents who say they are very happy with the school. Good use is made of external expertise including the local authority early years adviser. All adults reflect continuously on their practice and what has gone well or what needs further development. All risk assessments are comprehensive and thorough, covering every aspect of provision.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Ensure all schemes of work are of a consistently high quality and provide effective guidance to teachers about expectations for learning including clear assessment criteria.
- Enhance the current approach to evaluating and recording pupils' progress so that the school has a clearer picture of how much progress pupils have made from their starting points.
- Ensure that all written feedback is developmental as well as supportive so that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Pre-preparatory		
Date school opened	7 September 2010		
Age range of pupils	3–7 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 5	Total: 12
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 6	Girls: 1	Total: 7
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 7275		
Address of school	50 Church Street Willingham Cambridge CB24 5HT		
Telephone number	01954 263113		
Email address	head@thephoenixschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqueline Daire		
Proprietor	Tracey Best		