

Phoenix House Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117702
Local Authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	358178
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Keith Massett

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Beasant
Headteacher	Colin Harrington
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed seven teachers and two higher level teaching assistants. They also observed the work of the teaching assistants and learning mentors. Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Management Committee, School Improvement Partner, staff and individual pupils. Inspectors observed the pupil referral unit's (PRU's) work and looked at analysis of examination results, pupils' records, development plans, school records and a variety of policy and procedural documents. Inspectors analysed 21 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. Analysis of questionnaires from pupils and staff further informed the inspection.

- How well teaching and learning accelerate progress across the school and narrow achievement/attainment gaps.
- Whether the curriculum and care, guidance and support meet the full range of pupils' needs and interests.
- How well the school is promoting the achievement of different groups of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable.
- How effectively leaders and managers at all levels drive improvement.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies in promoting attendance.

Information about the school

Phoenix House operates on two sites and provides education for pupils with behavioural difficulties and associated learning needs. At the Phoenix House site, pupils from eight to 13 years of age (in Years 3 to 9) are mostly on short-term placements with a view to returning to school within two terms. This site also provides longer-term provision for pupils for whom a return to mainstream schooling is not felt to be a realistic option. A nurture group operates for pupils who are unable to access mainstream education effectively. The Park House site provides alternative provision for pupils from 14 to 16 years of age who are unable to return to mainstream school.

The unit underwent restructuring in 2009, resulting in significant staff changes. There is an acting headteacher and a number of other staff have temporary management responsibilities. Pupils are almost exclusively White British with a very large majority being boys. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average. The unit has achieved Healthy Schools Status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Phoenix House is satisfactory. The unit has strengths in teaching, the curriculum and care, guidance and support. The provision and outcomes for pupils within the nurture group are outstanding. Caring staff provide a welcoming, safe and secure learning environment with a strong focus on ensuring improved achievement, behaviour and attendance.

Pupils' attainment is low but rising. Their progress is satisfactory overall but is improving securely and quickly due to the overall good quality of teaching and a good curriculum. As a result, an increasing number of pupils make good progress and a few make outstanding progress. More pupils now enjoy their time in the unit and respond well to the good provision, displaying increasingly positive attitudes to learning. Progress seen in lessons and work seen in books are often good but these good outcomes are not yet evident in longer-term measures of progress nor are they yet consistent across the PRU. Key Stage 3 pupils, many of whom are on short-term placements, make satisfactory progress overall. This is because, although teaching is improving in Key Stage 3, it is not yet as consistently strong as in other parts of the unit.

Teachers, learning mentors and teaching assistants coordinate their work effectively and all contribute to the overall good quality of teaching. Pupils' learning needs are mostly well addressed but sometimes assessment is not used systematically in lessons to check pupils' understanding and to reshape tasks to best suit their learning needs. Improvements to provision are also having a positive impact on attendance and behaviour. While attendance remains low, it shows rapid improvements for most pupils when compared to their attendance at mainstream schools. This is also due to the PRU's well-planned and coordinated approach to improving attendance, particularly through its effective work with partners. Despite this, however, low attendance is still the prime barrier to learning for a small number of pupils who are persistently absent. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of individual pupils. The unit has recently improved the curriculum for older pupils to enable more opportunities for vocational courses and qualifications. Care, guidance and support for pupils, who often have extreme and difficult needs, are good. Staff know the pupils well, are well informed about their individual needs and targets and develop positive relationships to enable them to address varied and often complex difficulties.

The acting headteacher has successfully steered the PRU through a challenging period of restructure and redevelopment. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and the PRU is aware of where further improvements need to be made. Greater use is being made of data to set challenging targets. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily. The unit has established good systems for target-setting and tracking individual pupils but it does not thoroughly analyse outcomes for different groups of pupils to guide its self-evaluation and ensure resources are targeted effectively.

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Middle leaders are becoming more effective in leading change, although many are still temporary appointments. As a result, the drive for improvement has been dependent on one or two senior leaders and capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment for all pupils and improve their progress, particularly at Key Stage 3, by:
 - ensuring teaching and learning throughout the unit are at least consistently good
 - consistently providing work that closely matches pupils' learning needs
 - ensuring assessment is used systematically in lessons to check pupils understanding and to reshape tasks
 - improving the attendance of the few pupils who are persistently absent.
- Improve self-evaluation and deployment of resources by sharpening the analysis of the outcomes for different groups of pupils.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' attainment on entry to the unit is often low; many have missed extended periods of schooling and this has significantly interrupted their learning. Pupils are interested, enjoy and achieve well when learning involves practical activities. Inspectors saw pupils making outstanding progress when learning about food and their knowledge about the culture in Southern Asia was enriched by cooking and tasting a typical meal. Most pupils enjoy their time in the unit. Good teaching in Key Stage 2 enables the majority of pupils to make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Progress for pupils on short-term placements in Key Stage 3 is more variable as they take time to settle and for their needs to be assessed.

Also, teaching is not as consistently strong in Key Stage 3 as elsewhere in the unit. As a result, these pupils make satisfactory progress overall from their baseline assessments and most return to mainstream schools. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to others in the unit. Pupils with complex needs, in the nurture group, make outstanding progress due to the highly effective care and support they receive and the variety of learning experiences provided to meet their individual needs. Older pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 enjoy the recently improved opportunities offered for vocational courses and as a result, more are making good progress. Inspectors saw good outcomes in motor mechanics where motivated pupils worked cooperatively and successfully on a project to refurbish a motorbike.

Attendance is improving rapidly and is currently closer to the national average but remains low overall because of the persistent absence of a small number of pupils. The unit continues to address this as a major priority. Pupils understand what is expected of them and many make good progress in improving their behaviour. Fewer incidents of poor behaviour have been recorded since rewards for meeting targets and good behaviour

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were introduced and there is less exclusion. During the inspection, behaviour around the unit was predominantly good. Many pupils behaved very well in lessons observed and were fully engaged in learning. Healthy lifestyles are well promoted in the unit but some pupils do not apply these principles in their everyday life. Improvements in pupils' personal qualities and skills support their transition back to mainstream school or the world of work. Accreditation in basic skills, rapidly improving attendance and vocational opportunities within the curriculum support this process. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next steps in their education and at the end of Year 11, the vast majority continue into education, work or training.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall and this is reflected in the improving attainment, progress and behaviour. Teachers have good knowledge of the pupils and most use this to accurately match provision to the needs of the individuals. Learning mentors and teaching assistants provide very effective support for learning. Behaviour is well managed, resulting in minimal disruption to learning. There is a calm environment and good resources to support learning. Regular marking provides pupils with good information on how to improve their work and small steps in progress are rewarded. In the best lessons time is used well and systematic assessments check pupils' understanding and reshape tasks. In satisfactory lessons the pace is slower, group work limited and the use of data and

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assessment to inform learning variable. Learning experiences are not as closely matched to need for pupils in Key Stage 3 who spend a short time at the unit.

The curriculum in Years 3 to 9 is well matched to pupils' needs with a strong emphasis on developing skills in English and mathematics. It provides experiences matched to those in mainstream schools and supports pupils' reintegration back to the mainstream. It is enriched by sporting activities off-site. Carefully tailored activities for pupils in the excellent environment within the nurture group are resulting in outstanding progress for some pupils. The curriculum for older pupils is now closely matched to meet their individual needs since an increase in providing vocational opportunities. All pupils study accredited courses in English, mathematics and science. The range of vocational courses has increased with opportunities to study BTEC courses in sport, hospitality and hair and beauty. New courses are developing in the recently installed professional standard workshop fitted with mechanics equipment. The introduction of BTEC courses improved attainment in science with all pupils achieving a GCSE in 2010. The curriculum as a whole is enriched by visits and visitors. Art and design pupils have visited art galleries to extend their learning. Recent improvements seen in attendance, behaviour and achievement have been positively influenced by a more personalised curriculum and teaching. A sports leadership initiative is engaging pupils with previously high absence.

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff are very knowledgeable about pupils and their individual and emerging needs. Breakfast club provides a good start to the day, with opportunities for social interaction. Pupils are well supervised at all times. High expectations and a calm, consistent approach by staff ensure behaviour is well managed and incidents are dealt with effectively. Outside agencies are used satisfactorily overall to support pupils and there are good partnerships to support improving attendance. Parents are well informed and very appreciative of the weekly progress reports they receive. Partnerships with parents and carers are very effective in the nurture group but not as well developed across the unit. Parental questionnaires show that pupils feel safe and well cared for. One pupil commented, 'I know that every day there is someone who cares for me'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher is effective in communicating high expectations and driving improvement. He has provided vision and led change during a period of uncertainty for the unit. Good procedures to ensure the well-being, and health and safety of pupils have been maintained. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly effective, having gained

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knowledge and confidence from leading focus groups. They are a vital component in the unit's capacity to improve further. The management committee is supportive and aware of the main strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement. However, its monitoring arrangements to support and challenge the unit's leaders are relatively new and not yet robust. Current safeguarding requirements are met. Leaders and managers have ensured that the unit is a cohesive community in itself, but recognise there remains more to do to broaden students' understanding and confidence in living and working in the wider community. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily but analysis of pupils' outcomes by different groups does not fully inform self-evaluation and deployment of resources to support learning.

The unit makes good efforts to engage parents and carers. It informs them about learning and about their child's successes. While some parents appreciate this, many prove hard to reach, limiting the unit's success in involving them in their children's education. Partnerships with a variety of agencies and increasingly with vocational providers, contribute to pupils' well-being and future careers. The unit provides satisfactory and improving outcomes for its students.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors' analysis of responses to questionnaires indicates that most parents and carers are happy with their children's experience at Phoenix House and that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that their children are safe. Parents were unanimous that communications; help given to them to support their children's learning; the progress that their children are making; the way in which the unit deals with unacceptable behaviour; and the quality of teaching are good. A few expressed concerns that their children did not enjoy attending and disagreed that the unit helped them to lead healthy lifestyles.

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Inspectors found that increasingly pupils enjoy their time at the unit and achievement is improving. While healthy lifestyles are well promoted, staff are aware that some pupils do not always apply these principles when they are not at the unit.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Phoenix House Pupil Referral Unit to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	5	24	10	48	4	19	1	5
The school keeps my child safe	11	52	10	48	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	11	52	10	48	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	48	10	48	0	0	1	5
The teaching is good at this school	9	43	10	48	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	43	10	48	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	33	11	52	3	14	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	7	33	10	48	1	5	1	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	43	9	43	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	52	9	43	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	43	10	48	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	43	9	43	2	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	48	8	38	1	5	1	5

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Phoenix House Pupil Referral Unit, Grimsby, DN32 7NQ

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for the welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school. I would like to give my particular thanks to those of you who gave up time to talk to inspectors and completed questionnaires.

We found that Phoenix House provides you with a satisfactory and improving education. We found that you are taught well and this is helping more pupils to make good progress in lessons. The increased range of qualifications offered and the work-related courses mean that you are prepared well for when you leave the centre.

Although many of you came to the unit because your behaviour was unacceptable in your previous schools, we found that your behaviour at Phoenix House is usually good. When there are incidents of unacceptable behaviour these are usually managed calmly so that learning is not disrupted too much.

We judged care, guidance and support to be good because of the good guidance you receive from the staff, who know you well. You told us that you agree and that you feel safe at the unit.

Although many of you do well in gaining the levels and qualifications you do, we think that some of you could gain higher grades and make better progress, particularly in Key Stage 3. We have asked the staff to help you to do this by making sure that work is always closely matched to your individual needs and that your learning in lessons is regularly checked to make sure the work you are doing is not too easy or too difficult. We have asked the unit's leaders to make sure all lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, are well matched to your individual learning needs.

You can help by continuing to work hard and, for those few pupils who are persistently absent, by making sure you attend regularly.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Massett

Lead inspector

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