

Phoenix House Pupil Referral Unit

Harold Street, Grimsby, DN32 7NQ

Inspection dates 20 –21 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The achievement of pupils in Phoenix House, most of whom are in Key Stage 3 requires improvement because the quality of teaching in many of their lessons is not strong enough to allow them to make good progress even though these pupils are ready and willing to learn.
- There is a lack of good teaching expertise and subject knowledge. In a few lessons, this reduces the pace and challenge in pupils' work.
- The headteacher and leaders have much to put right so that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better across the school. They are at an early stage of making the necessary improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- Key Stage 4 pupils in Park House make good progress and all leave school having achieved GCSE and other qualifications enabling them to go on to college, training or employment.
- The quality of teaching at Park House School is good.
- On both sites pupils' behaviour improves considerably and is good. Pupils feel safe and enjoy good relationships with staff and each other.
- Staff work well together and have clear aims. This is improving pupils' achievement in Park House and, on both sites, they are improving pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.
- The inspector observed 10 lessons, five each at Phoenix House and Park House. Eight of nine teachers were observed. Five of the lessons seen were observed jointly by the inspector and headteacher.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation including policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, the school's evaluation of its own performance and data on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Meetings were held with staff, representatives of the management committee and from the local authority. Conversations with pupils took place informally.
- Not enough parents responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for the inspector to take account of their views.

Inspection team

Alan Lemon, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school operates on two sites three miles apart. Phoenix House provides full-time education for pupils in Key Stages 1 to 3. The youngest pupils currently on roll are in Key Stage 2. Park House provides full-time education for pupils in Key Stage 4. All pupils have either been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools or special schools very largely as a result of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- There are 49 pupils currently on roll, all of whom are supported through school action plus and all but three are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. Four pupils have a statement of special educational needs either because of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, moderate learning difficulties or an autism spectrum disorder. Four pupils are looked after by the local authority. All of the pupils are of White British heritage.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2012 having worked for many years at Park House as a teacher and latterly as a senior leader.
- Since 2009, the school has undergone two reorganisations both of which have changed its aims and affected how it is staffed. Reorganisation in September 2012 moved the school's focus from its vocational emphasis with fewer qualified teachers to one increasing academic opportunities and requiring more qualified teachers.
- Leaders are recruiting teachers and are currently relying on a significant number of temporary teachers supplied by outside agencies. Some higher-level teaching assistants have been appointed as unqualified teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that most is good or better by:
 - developing teachers' knowledge and skills in ways of teaching pupils that engage and excite them about learning and help them make good progress
 - increase teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach in order that they plan lessons well, set high expectations and pupils learn effectively, particularly by knowing exactly what they are intended to learn.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - carrying out regular and rigorous checks on the quality of teaching on both sites
 - providing a detailed programme of training and professional development for teachers, and making sure that good and outstanding practice in school and in other schools is shared
 - improving the gathering and use of data that track pupils' progress so that they give a true and accurate picture of pupils' performance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils attending Phoenix House are prevented from making good progress in lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3 because the teaching they receive is not strong enough or planned sufficiently well for them to learn well.
- The pupils of Phoenix House are willing learners and behave well in lessons but too often they do the minimum of work. They were not enthused or challenged by their English and science lessons. Many pupils come into Phoenix House already well below the standard expected in literacy and numeracy and are not getting ahead quickly enough to help them catch up with literacy skills.
- Mathematics is often taught well so that many of the Phoenix House pupils make good progress in numeracy. Year 9 pupils are working at the expected level for their age. In a lesson seen, these pupils were thoroughly engaged in solving problems using squared and cubed numbers, quickly grasping and effectively applying the rules for these complex calculations.
- At Park House, pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in all of their subjects because teaching is consistently good. Pupils also tackle work with a positive attitude to learning and are keen to do well. They find motivation in work and activities that offer a good balance of academic and work-related learning which are well suited to pupils' needs, interests and talents. By the time they leave at the end of Year 11, all have attained GCSE and BTEC qualifications. Over the past three years, the number of qualifications gained by all pupils and the number achieved by each pupil have increased.
- Good support in lessons, on both sites, means pupils who have low attainment or learning difficulties because of their disabilities or special educational needs are helped with their work and enabled to keep up with others. However, adults assisting the teacher are not always told what to do and how to help. In these instances, opportunities to support pupils in the ways they need are missed and this means they make less progress.
- At Phoenix House and Park House, pupils make good progress in improving their behaviour, attendance and their attitude to learning. This is largely as a result of the positive relationships formed with staff as well as the substantial care and support that staff provide. Pupils' rate of attendance has increased each year for the past three years to stand currently at over 90% overall with very little persistent absence.
- Almost all pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium although school leaders and the management committee are unclear on the amount of funding available and how it is being spent. As a result, the school has not started any work aimed at giving extra support to the pupils entitled and this has impacted on pupils' achievement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is too variable in quality to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. The impact is felt at Phoenix House and in Key Stage 3 where most lessons are taught by temporary teachers whose teaching expertise and subject knowledge does not inspire and engage pupils well enough. Leaders are at a very early stage of developing teaching although they have begun the work of evaluating lessons and setting teachers targets for improvement.
- The unqualified teachers, who previously worked as teaching assistants in the school produced some of the best teaching seen in Phoenix House. However, some others, on both sites, lack the depth of subject expertise to make lessons engaging for pupils. They depend too much on worksheets rather than expert teaching to challenge pupils.
- Too many lessons at Phoenix House are not planned with the skill and precision required to meet the needs of pupils. What precisely pupils should learn and how this builds on what they already know and can do is not obvious in some planning. Pupils are left not knowing clearly the purpose of their work.

- Without a good plan, teachers take up too much lesson time talking to pupils, leaving them with too little scope for getting on with work. Too much talk sometimes means that pupils are given more information and facts than they can take in. They resort to being politely uninterested and their opportunity to work, learn and make progress is much reduced.
- Teaching in Park House is good and it has been much less affected by reorganisation. Teachers are a close-knit team promoting good learning and progress even though the subject expertise of some is limited. Lessons are well-planned and planning benefits from the clear direction set in examination courses. Pupils' work is assessed well so both teachers and pupils know what progress is being made towards pupils' target examination grade. More-able pupils are set challenging targets which aim for higher GCSE grades.
- When teachers make the role of the teaching assistant clear in their planning, teaching assistants are able to support learning effectively and encourage pupils to work hard. Good use is not made of teaching assistants in some lessons, however. In a good mathematics lesson for less-able Year 7 and Year 8 pupils, an assistant expertly helped one pupil to learn to count out objects securely and then accurately divide these into equal groups. This improved the pupil's understanding of numbers and the way they divide, at the same time building his confidence for doing mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils appreciate the good relationships they have with staff on both sites. Their positive attitude to school compares favourably with negative experiences at previous schools. This has a good effect on their behaviour which improves significantly. Pupils settle quickly and the great majority has little difficulty fitting into routines or meeting the school's high expectations for hard work, co-operation and good behaviour.
- Pupils score points each day for good behaviour, work and progress towards their individual targets. This is applied consistently by staff and is valued by pupils because of the rewards to be gained for reaching a high score. Each pupil is motivated to perform well and, as the system also rewards groups of pupils, they are encouraged to help each other's performance.
- Despite the fact that many pupils have had difficulty in relating positively to others and behaving well, there is little misbehaviour around school or in lessons on both sites. Pupils are polite, considerate and exercise self control. Even when they have to sit through an uninspiring lesson they maintain a good standard of behaviour and regard for others.
- There are few exclusions or incidents of bullying. Staff ensure that pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying, including harassment using the Internet. Bullying is a lesson topic covered in the personal, social and health education curriculum and this is supported by a school anti-bullying project each year. Pupils feel safe and are kept safe. Staff are alert to any signs that pupils are feeling stress and are quick to react and offer support.
- Pupils like school and older pupils value the certainty of completing their education and gaining the qualifications that give them a foothold on further education and employment. Attendance is good and many pupils improve their attendance significantly. All pupils get themselves to school using public transport and arrive on time.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has high expectations and shows the determination in managing the school's changing role and tackling the challenge of ensuring that staff are fully equipped to meet pupils' needs. As a very new leader, her impact on improving teaching, where it is most needed, is at an early stage. Her task is made more difficult due to the high number of new teachers and temporary teachers at Phoenix House. However, the quality of teaching has started to be checked by the headteacher with teachers being given targets aimed at improving their

performance.

- Leadership and management get strength from the good team of long-standing staff who work together effectively and keep morale high. This is very evident in Park House where teaching and the curriculum are well-established and have not been as affected by change as at Phoenix House. On both sites, staff maintain the school's strong aims and expectations which have a powerful effect on pupils' feeling safe and valued. This leads to very positive relationships, good behaviour and pupils enjoying school.
 - For several years, small groups of staff have led the improvement of pupils' attainment, behaviour and attendance across the school. These leaders have had a good impact. While the analysis of data on pupils' performance is well-established, some of the data lack accuracy and do not always give a true picture of pupils' progress. However, the oversight of how pupils' behaviour is managed has had a significant effect. The rigorous checks made of pupils' attendance have reduced absences considerably.
 - The good curriculum provides a balance of academic and vocational work and activities. These suit the interests of pupils and provide relevant experiences that prepare them well for leaving school.
 - The local authority has kept a regular check on the school and supported its work. Officers have regularly reviewed the school's performance and helped with setting improvement priorities. This work has recently been handed over to a private company which is beginning to work with the school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee stays closely involved with the performance and improvement of the school. Members visit both sites to see how well they are working. Committees looking specifically at financial management and safeguarding ensure that these aspects of the school's operation are robust. The committee has pursued the extra funding coming through the pupil premium which is now finding its way into the school's budget. The intention is to use this money for developing teachers' expertise and subject knowledge. The committee is clear in its expectation that leaders provide detailed accounts of the school's work including staff and pupils' performance. The committee makes sure there is a strong link between a teacher's performance and any progression in pay. They also expect to see data and their analysis of pupils' progress and committee members have the expertise to interpret data and challenge leaders.
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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	117702
Local authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	405715

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	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Elizabeth Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2010
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