

# Phoenix Junior Academy

Glencoe Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 5QD

## Inspection dates

1–2 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Too few pupils attain as well as they should in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils do not do as well in writing as they do in reading or mathematics.
- Teaching, although improving, is not yet consistently good because it has not ensured that pupils make good enough progress or achieve well.
- The school's agreed policy for teaching and learning is not consistently implemented by all staff. Sometimes, expectations for achievement are not high enough and sometimes, pupils are not always clear about what or how they are learning.
- Work in subjects other than English and mathematics is not always well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Pupils' behaviour outside of lessons is not always good enough and too many pupils need reminding about what is acceptable behaviour.
- Attendance, although improving, remains below average.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, supported by other senior leaders and governors, has ensured that important aspects of the school's work are improving.
- Improved teaching has led to current pupils in the school making more rapid progress this academic year.
- The school keeps pupils safe and looks after them well.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and generally behave well in lessons.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons or part-lessons, some of which were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteachers. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work, looked at books and listened to some pupils read in class.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers and other staff with key leadership responsibilities. Discussions were also held with pupils, governors and the executive principal of the academy trust.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation including the school’s own check on its performance and the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan, information on pupils’ progress and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), 13 written responses and spoke to some parents and carers at the start of the day. They also looked at the 28 questionnaires returned by staff.

## Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Matthew Klimcke

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized junior school.
- The school has a diverse ethnic population. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Most of the other ethnic groups are represented in smaller numbers.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average, as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funds (pupil premium) is well above average. This is additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority.
- The school does not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.
- The school became an academy in September 2012 and is part of The Fort Pitt Academy Trust. There is an executive principal for the three schools in the trust.
- The headteacher took up her post in June 2013 following a period when the school did not have a substantive headteacher.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better and raise achievement by making certain that:
  - all staff consistently follow the school's policy for teaching and learning by having high expectations of what pupils can achieve and giving clear instructions and explanations about their learning
  - pupils learn as well in other subjects as they do in English and mathematics because work is consistently and appropriately challenging for different groups.
- Improve writing by ensuring that:
  - teachers provide pupils with good models of writing
  - pupils have more opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes and audiences in all subjects.
- Build on the relationship with parents and carers, and work with them to improve attendance and promote better behaviour in the playground to match pupils' good behaviour in lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because too few pupils reach the expected level of attainment in English and mathematics by the time they leave at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils start at the school in Year 3 with attainment that is significantly below average.
- Pupils' work and the school's checks on progress show that, overall, pupils currently in the school are making more rapid progress. Standards are improving, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6. However, this is not consistent across the school and therefore some pupils are not making fast enough progress to catch up with their learning.
- Pupils in Year 6 are on track to achieve standards that are much closer to average by the end of the year, particularly in reading and mathematics. This is because they are making faster progress as a result of improved teaching.
- In English, achievement in reading is stronger than in writing. This is because pupils benefit from the work they do, in small groups, on their reading skills. The school has correctly identified that there is more to do to promote pupils' reading for enjoyment.
- In writing, there are too few opportunities for pupils to see good models of writing by teachers to help them improve. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length in English and in other subjects for different audiences and purposes.
- In mathematics, the school has identified pupils' lack of fluency in applying skills. For example, knowledge of multiplication tables, as a weaker area, as well as the need to ensure that mathematics learning is more meaningful and relevant for pupils. Steps are being taken to address these areas.
- In the 2013 national tests, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 who received support funded by the pupil premium was similar to that of their classmates in reading and mathematics and around six months behind in writing. From their starting points at the beginning of Year 3 more of this group made the expected progress than others in the school. Current progress for eligible pupils in all year groups is similar to others.
- Higher expectations and support for the most-able pupils are helping this group to make more rapid progress and more pupils are on track to reach the higher level by the end of Year 6.
- Strong leadership and increasingly well-targeted support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are helping to raise achievement. However, as with all pupils, progress varies across the school. Additional support is effective when pupils receive individual or small-group support from skilled teaching assistants who ensure that their needs are well met.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement as it has not ensured that pupils make consistently good progress in English and mathematics.
- The school's checks on the quality of teaching show that teaching is improving and some is good or better, but inconsistencies remain across the school. The school's agreed policy for teaching is not consistently or successfully implemented in all classes and so some pupils do not acquire skills and knowledge as rapidly as they might.
- This is because, sometimes, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Some teaching does not give pupils clear explanations and instructions about what or how they are learning.
- However, teaching is now improving strongly and teachers' expectations of learning are higher than they have been in the past.
- As a result, all groups of pupils currently in the school, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those from different ethnic groups, are making more rapid progress. Teachers are now particularly effective in providing challenging work for the most-able pupils in all year groups. For example, pupils in a mathematics lesson agreed with one who said,

'It's good to be pushed a bit because sometimes you can do things you didn't think you could do.'

- In other subjects, teachers do not always plan work that enables pupils to learn as well as they could because sometimes the work is too easy for some and too hard for others.
- Teachers mark work regularly. Most provide clear guidance to help pupils improve their work, but not consistently so, and sometimes teachers do not ensure that pupils respond to their suggestions, and so mistakes are repeated. There are some good examples of pupils checking on their own and their partner's progress in lessons, which pupils say really helps them because, 'you can learn from everyone's mistakes'.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well and support learning effectively. They, like all teachers, have good relationships with pupils.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils are generally well-mannered and polite to adults, have good attitudes to learning and mostly behave well and appropriately in lessons. On a few occasions where teaching does not fully engage pupils, they can become distracted and lose their focus on learning.
- However, behaviour is not always good in the playground because some pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour and there is some inappropriate, overly boisterous behaviour during breaks and lunchtime. Pupils agree with this view. They say that there is some bullying but are confident that teachers and other adults deal promptly and fairly with any incidents. They have an adequate awareness of different types of bullying including racist and homophobic bullying.
- A large majority of parents and carers who responded in writing or to the online survey think that pupils are well behaved and that the school deals effectively with any bullying. A small minority raised concerns about behaviour and a few about bullying. However, the inspectors saw clear evidence from the school's records that behaviour has improved considerably over the past year and is typically good in lessons. Inappropriate behaviour has been eradicated and older pupils commented on better behaviour as one of the significant changes in the school since becoming an academy.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The large majority of the online responses from parents and carers, and all of the written responses, agree that pupils feel safe in school and are well looked after. Pupils say they feel safe and say the school helps them understand how to look after themselves, for example from talks on road safety.
- Attendance, although remaining below average, has improved over the past year. The number of exclusions has reduced. Changes made to the start of the school day have helped to greatly improve punctuality. However, there are still too many pupils who do not attend school regularly and, as a result, they miss out on important learning.
- The breakfast club provides a good, social and safe start to the day for those who attend.

### **The leadership and management**

### **are good**

- The new headteacher provides good leadership for the school. She is supported well by other leaders, including governors, who share the ambition and vision for the future of the school and the drive to improve standards.
- On her appointment, the headteacher quickly identified weaknesses in important aspects of the school's performance. In a relatively short amount of time, prompt and effective action has been taken. High aspirations and high expectations of teachers and pupils' progress have resulted in inadequate teaching being eradicated, improved behaviour and attendance, and improving achievement across the school.
- However, these actions have not yet resulted in pupils attaining high enough results at the end

of Key Stage 2 or in enough pupils making more than expected progress to catch up with gaps in their learning. This is why leadership and management are not outstanding. The school faces many challenges to raise attainment to national levels but leaders have demonstrated, by the impact of their actions to date, that there is strong capacity to make further improvements.

- Literacy and numeracy leaders are fully involved in checking on the quality of teaching and make a good contribution to whole-school improvement as well as providing guidance to colleagues and expertise in their subjects.
- Arrangements for setting targets for teachers are robust, and appropriate support and training is provided for all staff to improve their skills and expertise.
- Leaders have a clear commitment to equality of opportunity, although they know that not all pupils are achieving as well as they should.
- In addition to the headteacher's relentless focus on raising standards, she is also managing the partly finished substantial building work in the school. Pupils said the larger, brighter classrooms 'make a big difference to us, we have more space and they make us feel good'.
- The school teaches a broad range of subjects and pupils benefit from specialist teaching from the trust's secondary school teachers in art, drama, music and science. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted adequately through the subjects and the school's values. A range of additional activities, trips and visitors to school enriches pupils' learning well and broadens their experiences.
- The primary school sports funding is spent effectively on increasing pupils' participation in sports clubs and competitive events with other schools as well as improving teachers' expertise through working with specialist coaches. The funding is also being used to provide swimming lessons for all non-swimmers in Year 6. All these actions have a positive impact on pupils' health and well-being.
- The pupil premium funding is, in part, used to ensure that all pupils, particularly those who may be at risk of not doing as well, have access to the opportunities offered by the school. Additional teaching staff provide extra support for groups and individuals. The impact is evident in the improving progress of eligible pupils, who form the largest majority of pupils in the school, in developing better literacy and numeracy skills.
- The large majority of parents and carers feel that the school is led and managed well. Several parents and carers spoken with at the start of the day commented on positive changes and improvements since the new headteacher was appointed, in particular, improved behaviour and more challenging lessons.
- The school ensures that all pupils are safe and meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding.
- The academy trust provides good support to the school. The headteacher works productively with the executive principal who is closely involved in the development of the school's leadership.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is committed to the school and the drive for improvement. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are fully aware that the school is not yet where it should be. They have a good awareness of the school's data and so know how well the school is performing in relation to schools nationally. Governors have become more effective in challenging the school and holding it to account for its performance. They know about the quality of teaching and link decisions on teacher's pay to the progress of pupils. Governors have revised the format of their meetings to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness. The governing body monitors the allocation and impact of pupil premium funds to ensure it makes a difference to pupils' achievement. Statutory duties, including safeguarding requirements, are fully met.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138510
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	426384

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	249
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Denise Ford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alyson Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 302345
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