

Phoenix House Pupil Referral Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117702
Local Authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	301382
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

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	7–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Beasant
Headteacher	Mr Colin Harrington
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Harold Street Grimsby DN32 7NQ
Telephone number	01472 351412
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Age group	7–14
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Phoenix House pupil referral unit operates on two sites. To avoid confusion, the use of 'Phoenix House' refers to both sites; Phoenix (House) to one of them and Park House to the other. Each site has a unit manager and its own staff. Each collates its own data for pupils' progress and personal development and the quality of provision.

There are 38 pupils on the roll of Phoenix and 24 on the roll of Park House. On both sites nearly all pupils are boys. All pupils are White British, 19 have statements of special educational need (SEN) reflecting greater than average emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Two pupils are looked after by the local authority. Nearly all pupils come from areas experiencing much greater than average social and economic deprivation. Attainment on entry is usually well below average.

Phoenix offers short-term placements for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 with a view to returning them to school within two terms, six-week placements for a few pupils on their first exclusion who are being primed for a return to a different school (Route 6) and also places for twice-excluded pupils who are unlikely to return to school at any point in the future. Park House is for Key Stage 4 pupils who are not expected to return to school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Phoenix House is not sufficiently effective in meeting its core objectives of improving pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance. In accordance with Section 13 (3) of The Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances that it reasonably might be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement and personal development.

The unit provides for many of the most demanding pupils in the local authority. Most of these pupils have failed to thrive in any of their previous schools and all are either permanently excluded or at great risk of being so on account of their behaviour, which is often extreme. The provision for primary-age pupils is good; they are well taught and make good progress and most attend at every possible opportunity. These pupils' enjoyment of lessons is clearly evident; they are proud of their achievements and most return successfully to school within two terms. Route 6 pupils also make good progress and attend well, paving the way for success in their new schools. Short-stay Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress and are also often returned to school. However, the long-stay pupils, most of whom are in Year 9 and account for about a third of Phoenix pupils, do not make enough progress, mainly because their attendance and behaviour are poor. Many transfer to Park House at the end of Year 9. The Park House pupils who attend regularly make satisfactory progress, leaving with up to three GCSE passes in English, mathematics and science. Attendance, however, is unsatisfactory in many cases and high absence rates hinder the progress of the pupils concerned.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and occasionally good on both sites. It is pupils' absence, rather than the quality of teaching, which results in a particular group of pupils who significantly underachieve and overall achievement therefore is unsatisfactory. Misbehaviour also presents significant problems, mainly in Key Stage 3. It led to 80 short-term exclusions from Phoenix last year, most of them for very serious actions, which could affect the safety of staff and pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory, and good in Key Stage 2. However, a weakness is that there are not enough opportunities for Key Stage 4 pupils to follow a more work-related programme. Pupils make few contributions to the unit's community but their growing awareness of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles is shown in their participation in physical exercise and through sensible, healthy eating.

Phoenix House is in the midst of a period of change in leadership and management. The local authority has recently assumed responsibility for overseeing the work of the two unit managers, who satisfactorily manage each of the sites on a day-to-day basis. In the past, the unit has tended to operate as two discrete units rather than as a single one on two sites and this has led to inefficiencies in the deployment of staffing and resources and the lack of an overview of the unit as a whole. Although there has been little improvement since the previous inspection, the recent changes put the unit in a much better position to manage provision and to work efficiently. Consequently, the unit now has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement and standards
- Improve pupils' behaviour.
- Improve pupils' attendance.
- Where possible, reduce the pupils' length of stay, especially those with SEN.

- Ensure that older pupils can benefit from work-related education.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Overall achievement is inadequate. Although many pupils achieve well in both units, achievement at Park House is generally not good enough. The main reason for this is poor attendance and misbehaviour.

Pupils' attainment on entry to the unit is nearly always low. Few pupils achieve national standards, more because of the effect of behaviour rather than the ability to learn. Pupils who establish a regular pattern of attendance benefit from their teaching, which is rarely less than satisfactory, and they make satisfactory or good progress. A large group of pupils, however, does not attend with sufficient frequency and, therefore, underachieves.

Many of the younger pupils achieve well and this is a strength of the unit. Key Stage 2 pupils benefit from consistently good teaching and a good curriculum. Most attend every day and make good progress, particularly in their literacy and numeracy skills, and meet most of their individual targets. This helps them to return to mainstream school having made up much lost ground in their education. In Key Stage 3, the Route 6 pupils also make good progress: they are well taught, well motivated and enjoy their learning. They too return to mainstream school quickly. During the inspection, both these groups were seen to be doing well in lessons.

A group of 11 Key Stage 3 pupils, who have been excluded from at least two previous schools, are underachieving. These pupils' poor attendance and behaviour hinder their learning and most of them fail to reach their targets. Many of these pupils transfer to Park House and continue to underachieve for the same reasons as in the past. By contrast, another group at Park House who attend regularly and are well motivated achieved well last year, with six of them passing GCSE exams in English, mathematics and science with grades D–G.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development are inadequate. This is because behaviour and attendance are unsatisfactory. Although there were no major incidents during the inspection and minor incidents were well dealt with, there have been 50 exclusions so far this year, almost a half of which involve assault on members of staff or other pupils. The number of exclusions is almost exactly the same as in the same period last year and Key Stage 3 pupils account for nearly all of them. Particularly good attendance in Key Stage 2 and Route 6 masks the very poor attendance of many Key Stage 3 pupils. Although the attendance of many pupils is better than at their previous schools it is not good enough and overall it is unsatisfactory. The poor attendance and behaviour of many pupils account for their underachievement. As a result, many pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for their future economic well-being. Pupils are encouraged to lead active, healthy lives and, whilst in the units, they participate in physical activity and adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils make little contribution to the broader community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They are consistently good in Key Stage 2 and in Route 6. Pupils experiencing difficulties are usually quickly removed from points of conflict, with the result that misbehaviour tends not to impair learning opportunities for others. Lesson planning is usually good and teachers show a good understanding of the subjects they teach. Learning expectations are clearly stated. Teachers are aware of the different abilities of individuals and prepare work that usually challenges them sufficiently. Classroom assistants provide good support to those who find the work difficult and also support those experiencing personal difficulties effectively. The teachers use a lot of worksheets but they are appropriate for the tasks set and help pupils to present their work in an organised fashion. Teachers use technology increasingly effectively, especially interactive whiteboards and computer programmes that help pupils to revise and check their own progress. The main weakness of teaching is that, on too many occasions, teachers underestimate the amount of work pupils could complete or of the length of time they can concentrate. This causes problems when work is completed early and pupils are allowed reward or recreational time, which is sometimes insufficiently well structured, allowing unnecessary scope for misbehaviour.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers have a good understanding of the National Curriculum so that they can prepare work which is closely matched to that which pupils would be doing in mainstream schools. This makes a good contribution to helping pupils return successfully to those schools. The timetable is well balanced, ensuring that there is a good focus on basic skills whilst still allowing sufficient time for pupils to study other areas of learning which add interest, variety and enjoyment to the day. At Park House, the curriculum helps pupils to achieve success in GCSE, Entry Level and ASDAN courses. However, a weakness is the provision for work-based education, which gives pupils only limited opportunities to achieve success in work-related activities or to participate in college courses. Enrichment activities are satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils' progress is regularly monitored. Many of the unit's systems, such as those for safeguarding, child protection and health and safety, are well developed and keenly observed. There are particularly good risk assessments for pupils. Rules are clearly displayed in all classrooms and pupils are encouraged to try hard to earn rewards that are well matched to individual circumstances and expectations. Absence is followed up through telephone calls, the involvement of education welfare and, where necessary, referral for prosecution. High absence means, of course, that many of these vulnerable pupils remain beyond the care and support of the unit. Strategies for improving behaviour have been successful in reducing low and mid-level misbehaviour in the classroom though occasional, serious misbehaviour remains a problem.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a growing awareness of the difficulties the unit faces, which has brought a good degree of clarity to its future organisation, and in the management of the increasingly complex needs of pupils.

Since the last inspection, these needs have escalated more quickly than the development of provision, with the result that improvement has been limited.

Reorganisation of the management of the unit is under way, taking good account of external advice. Leaders and managers now have a clearer view of their roles and responsibilities. The process is far from complete but the current management has the necessary skill and vision to ensure that the unit has a satisfactory capacity to bring about improvement. This is helped by the enthusiasm and conscientiousness of staff and by the unit's improving self-evaluation.

Monitoring of teaching is satisfactory but tends to focus more on performance management of individuals rather than on whole-school issues for improvement. Throughout, the management committee has remained supportive.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The behaviour of learners	4
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	4
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	4
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 May 2007

Dear Pupils

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

I visited a while ago to see how you were getting on. Thank you for your welcome. Over the two days I was with you I gathered a lot of information and saw most of you in class. A lot of what I saw and heard was pleasing but a couple of problems stood out.

I saw some good teaching, especially in Key Stage 2 and Route 6. That seems to be the main reason why you're making good progress in those groups and getting back to school quickly. Last year, six pupils at Park House left with three GCSEs each; that's a good start to life after school. They couldn't have done this if they hadn't attended. I think more pupils should be doing work-related activities and college courses to prepare for the future.

Too many of the rest of you aren't making enough progress though. This is not because of your teachers; it is because a lot of you do not get into class often enough to benefit from their efforts. If you are one of those who does attend regularly, pass it on to your friends and let them know what they are missing. Some of you do not behave well enough. Most of you tried very hard during my visit but more than half of you at Phoenix have been excluded at some point this year. Well done those of you who do not get involved. Some of you have been in the unit for a very long time, first in Phoenix and then Park House. Quite a large group of you have spent longer in the unit than in secondary school and that is not how it should be.

I've asked the unit to look at these points; I hope you will do your best and improve your attendance and behaviour.

Yours sincerely

Alastair Younger

(Lead inspector)