

# Phoenix House Pupil Referral Unit

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117702
<b>Local Authority</b>	North East Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	319271
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mel Blackband

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	74
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Steven Beasent
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Chris Saye
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Harold Street Grimsby DN32 7NQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01472 351412
<b>Fax number</b>	01472 349318

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<b>Age group</b>	8–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. At the time of the last inspection in May 2007, the school was judged to require significant improvement because it was not sufficiently effective in meeting its core objectives of improving pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance.

## Description of the school

Phoenix House Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) operates on two sites and provides education for pupils with behaviour difficulties and associated learning needs. At the Phoenix House site, pupils from eight to 13 years of age are mostly on short-term placements with a view to returning to school within two terms. There are also a few pupils who are admitted following their first exclusion and who are supported as they reintegrate into a new school. In addition, this site provides long-term provision for pupils who have been twice excluded and for whom a return to mainstream schooling is not felt to be a realistic option.

The Park House site provides alternative provision for pupils from 14 to 16 years of age who are unable to return to mainstream school. A further group of excluded pupils at this site follow full-time or part-time work-related programmes with a range of private providers. The pupils are almost exclusively White British and nearly all pupils come from areas experiencing much greater than average levels of social and economic deprivation. Over half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the pupil referral unit no longer requires significant improvement. This has been brought about by changes in the quality of the unit's provision and the positive impact this has had on the pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance.

Phoenix House PRU has made tremendous progress over the past year in improving the quality of provision for its pupils. The great majority of pupils now achieve well. This has been because of the impact of intensive work by the staff since the last inspection, to improve the curriculum, the teaching and the management of the pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils now demonstrate much more positive attitudes to learning. Once in the unit, pupils quickly gain self-esteem and the motivation to succeed after a history of failure at their previous schools. This plays a vital part in underpinning their good academic achievements. They value what the unit offers them and they develop good relationships with staff. The pupils' attendance has significantly improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Pupils enjoy coming to the unit and parents who replied to the inspection questionnaires are, pleased for their children to attend, knowing they will be safe and happy and that the unit has high expectations of their success. One parent's comment was typical, 'We have seen his confidence and self-esteem grow.'

The pupils enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. The teaching is good because lessons are interesting and well managed. Teachers throughout the school successfully adapt learning activities to the differing abilities and interests of the pupils. However, this is made more difficult for them because the assessment procedures used in school are not sufficiently precise to allow teachers to record effectively each step in the pupils' progress. Consequently, the pupils' targets are not sharply focused enough. This slows down the pace of their learning because some pupils are unsure how to improve their work. In contrast however, the pupils' personal development targets are extremely clear and this plays a significant part in helping pupils to improve their behaviour. The good curriculum provision is enriched by good programmes in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The provision for older pupils to learn work-related skills has greatly improved since the previous inspection. The pupils are motivated by a variety of opportunities to prepare themselves for college or further training when they leave school. These improvements have been significant in encouraging the older pupils to develop more positive attitudes to education and in greatly improving attendance. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is not yet however, sufficiently well adapted to the learning needs and interests of every pupil and this accounts for the low levels of attendance by a few pupils in this age group.

The headteacher has led the unit exceedingly well. Under her management, and supported by a strong senior team, the unit has moved forward significantly over the past year. Regular meetings of the management committee provide a clear vision for the school. Strategic management is excellent and the school evaluates its own work effectively and promptly addresses identified concerns. Good procedures for development planning mean strategies for improvement are clear and their impact is evident in rising standards. Because of this, the unit has a good capacity to build on the progress made since the last inspection.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Develop precision and consistency in the use of assessment to provide students with sharply-focused learning targets which clearly show them how to improve their work.

- Improve the opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to make choices from a wider range of activities especially those offering work related experiences which they regard as interesting and worthwhile.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The pupils' attainment on entry to the unit is generally well below average. Once in the unit, however, pupils make good progress in improving their attitudes to learning. As a result, over the last year, standards have risen and are now just below average. The pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 and in Years 7 to 9 achieve well and a few make outstanding progress over the two terms they spend in the unit. Their progress is hindered by the lack of clarity in their learning targets. Most pupils are able to return successfully to a mainstream school. The exceptions to this are the twice-excluded pupils who remain at the PRU. The progress of these pupils, in Years 7 to 9, was judged inadequate in the previous inspection but has improved substantially over the last year. The standards of work remain low but they are making good progress because they now show much greater interest in their learning and try hard to achieve success. The unit's assessment data predicts that all the pupils in one Year 11 group are on track to gain at least one GCSE (A\* to G grades) and most are predicted to gain passes in three subjects. This is a good improvement on last year's figures. Other Year 11 pupils whose achievement was judged inadequate in the previous inspection are successfully engaged in full or part-time, work-related placements and are gradually gaining a range of qualifications in literacy and numeracy and in vocational subjects.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The pupils' good progress in their personal development reflects the unit's strong emphasis on moral and social values. The pupils are considerate to other pupils and staff. They develop a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and of keeping themselves safe. Pupils say they are happy that bullying 'is not a problem here'. They make a good contribution to the well-being of other pupils because their views are sought by staff and any concerns acted upon to improve the quality of provision. Pupils have many opportunities to meet adults such as police community support officers and they gain a good understanding of how they can contribute to their local community. The older pupils who remain in the unit make good progress in basic skills and in well-organised, work-related learning and this means that they are well prepared for when they leave in Year 11.

Pupils know what is expected from them within the unit's calm and structured atmosphere and they make good progress in improving and controlling their behaviour. When pupils' behaviour becomes unacceptable, staff deal with incidents calmly and with understanding and support for the pupil involved. Parents confirm that their children enjoy their learning and have a high regard for the unit. This is reflected in most pupils' improving attendance and good attitudes to learning, both of which have a substantial impact on their achievements. The attendance of a few pupils in Years 10 and 11 is however, still much lower than it should be. This prevents them from making the progress of which they are capable.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and this reflects the effective monitoring procedures by senior staff. Teachers and their assistants work together in close partnership and they know their pupils very well. Individual pupils benefit from the high level of support they receive. As a result, they become much more confident in attempting new things and this has a positive impact on their achievement. Teachers work from clear schemes of work and make good use of national strategies for delivering their subject. This adds rigour to their teaching. Teachers, however, do not always efficiently record each small step in the pupils' progress and consequently their learning targets are less well focused. The pupils like their teachers and the support staff, and so respond well in lessons. The management of behaviour is excellent. Pupils understand and respect the clear routines and this assists in keeping a strong focus on learning.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum for Years 3 to 9 is well balanced and matched appropriately to the work pupils would do in mainstream schools. This helps the pupils to return successfully to these schools. There is a clear emphasis on developing the pupils' skills in English and mathematics. The pupils enhance their learning well through a range of extra activities including many sporting activities such as swimming, tennis and a football team. This adds considerably to their enjoyment of their learning.

There has been substantial improvement to the arrangements for vocational and work-related learning. Year 10 and 11 pupils now have an improving range of opportunities to develop skills off-site with a training provider, for example, in construction, hairdressing or catering. These courses all lead to nationally approved qualifications. This results in pupils becoming familiar with other places of learning and provides an excellent bridge to further study when they leave school. The range of learning activities is not yet wide enough, however, to motivate a small group of pupils whose absence rate remains high.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Rigorous safeguarding procedures are in place which help to ensure that the unit provides a high level of care. Extra support is available if necessary from a variety of organisations, such as the local authority substance abuse team and from the school's own home-school liaison officer. Staff provide strong support for pupils when they reintegrate back into mainstream education and they provide a good level of support to pupils with behavioural difficulties in other schools.

The pupils clearly understand the challenging targets to improve their behaviour and try hard to meet these. Teachers use assessment information well to plan activities to meet pupils' individual needs and to provide them with individual learning targets. However, teachers do not generally write these targets with sufficient precision to enable pupils to understand how to improve their work and thus make even faster progress.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher has been inspirational in raising the performance of the school so significantly in a short space of time. She has strengthened the management team who all work together with staff to help all students to achieve equally well. There is a clear commitment to seeking improvement. Communication is a strength with regular meetings closely monitoring what is happening in school. This has sharpened the school's vision for the school. As a result, the school's planning is correctly focused on priorities for improving pupils' performance. Priorities are changed into actions and the impact of these can clearly be seen in rising standards and the improvements in attendance and behaviour. Leaders are aware of the next steps including the need to ensure their learning targets are better focused to help them learn more effectively. Senior staff monitor the pupils' personal development and behaviour targets exceptionally well and leaders maintain a good overview of their progress.

Communication within the unit is good and the high quality of professional training is effectively linked to procedures for managing the performance of teachers and other staff. This has improved the consistency of teaching and the pupils' achievement. Resources are used effectively and the unit gives good value for money. The management committee, which is made up of representatives of the local community, monitors each aspect of the school's performance extremely effectively. Together with the local authority, they have provided the unit with exceptionally high levels of challenge and support which have helped the unit to improve rapidly since the last inspection.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 June 2008

Dear Pupils

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

When I came to the unit recently, you made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting you. Thank you for your friendliness and good manners and the way you helped me with my work. Phoenix House is a good Pupil Referral Unit and it is obvious that you enjoy being there. These are some of the good things I found.

- You work hard and most of you make good progress in your work.
- You have made massive improvements in both your behaviour and attendance. Well done!
- You have a good range of activities, which means you can successfully transfer back to mainstream schools if that is appropriate for you.
- Lessons are interesting and you are well taught; this means that you enjoy learning and do your best.
- Older students have much better opportunities to learn skills which will be useful when you leave the unit; this will help you to be more confident when you go into new situations.
- All the adults at the unit look after you well.
- The unit is well managed.

I think the unit's work could be made even better. I have asked the school to ensure the staff record more frequently all aspects of the progress you make and to give you clearer targets to assist you in improving your work. I have also asked the school to offer a greater range of work-related options for pupils in Years 10 and 11 so that some of you might attend more regularly and learn new skills.

You can help too, just by working as hard as you have been on improving your behaviour and the standard of your work and by continuing to support each other.

Best wishes to you all

Mel Blackband

Lead inspector