

Phoenix Academy

85 Bounces Road, Edmonton, London, N9 8LD

Inspection dates 4–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Good leadership and management have successfully focused on securing good outcomes for pupils. As a result, pupils achieve well throughout the school, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Teaching is good overall and enables most pupils to make good progress. The staff have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They motivate pupils highly and pupils are eager to do their best.
- The curriculum is effective in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain and the next stage of their education. It provides pupils with a solid foundation in English and mathematics.
- The Christian ethos permeates school life and fosters pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils behave well and their attendance is good. They are properly safeguarded and they feel safe.
- The sixth form is good and prepares students well for higher or further education.
- The headteacher, staff, proprietors and management committee work closely together to develop the school further. They have demonstrated a good capacity to secure further improvements. The proprietors have ensured that all of the Independent Schools' Standards are met.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not consistently good and a few pupils do not make the same good progress as others.
- The progress pupils make in the afternoon subjects is not presented in a way that is easy to understand and not reported in writing to parents.
- Pupils' first-hand experiences are not sufficiently broad to deepen their appreciation of diversity and their understanding of democracy.
- The school's improvement plans are not sufficiently detailed and precise to be able to say whether targets have been met.
- The management committee does not check on all aspects of the school's work with sufficient rigour.
- The headteacher, who teaches full time, has too much to do.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out at one day's notice.
- The inspector observed pupils' learning in the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum in the morning sessions and in supplementary activities in the afternoon. She also observed how supervisors carry out their roles. The inspector listened to pupils read and spoke to pupils about their work and enrichment activities.
- The inspector examined a wide range of evidence including the school website, policies and procedures, behaviour logs, curriculum plans, records of pupils' progress and pupils' work.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, a member of the management committee and pupils.
- Too few parents and carers responded to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to obtain statistical results. However, the inspector took into account parental responses to a survey carried out by the school in April 2014 and spoke to one parent who visited the school. The inspector also took account of six questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Michèle Messaoudi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Phoenix Academy is an independent day school that follows the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum, which is provided by Christian Education Europe. In the mornings, pupils follow individual programmes of work leading to the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE). This is supplemented by group activities taught in the afternoon.
- The school was initially registered in August 2003 to provide education for pupils aged from 11 to 16 years. Following its last inspection in April 2011, the school applied for a material change to extend its age range from five to 18 years. A material change inspection in May 2011 recommended the proposed material change for up to 45 pupils.
- There are currently 27 pupils on roll aged from five to 17 years, one of whom is partly home-schooled and attends the school part time. There are more boys than girls. The majority of pupils have Black African or Black Caribbean backgrounds. A few pupils were home-schooled prior to joining the school. Nine pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and one has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). One pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is owned by the New Living Ministries Trust that comprises of three trustees. It is led by a headteacher who teaches full time, and a deputy headteacher who works part time and leads the sixth form. Both are accountable to a management team composed of parents, staff members and former pupils.
- The staff include three full-time supervisors who oversee pupils' learning in the ACE curriculum, one classroom monitor and three part-time volunteers who teach supplementary subjects in the afternoon. The headteacher took up his post in January 2011.
- The school uses local facilities for physical education.
- The school aims to 'provide a strong foundation on which pupils can build their lives within an ethos of respect, responsibility and Christian faith'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help pupils to achieve outstandingly well by:
 - further developing the skills of staff who teach the afternoon activities by giving them more detailed feedback on their teaching, and providing them with training that is better tailored to their needs
 - broadening the range of first-hand experiences pupils have to deepen their appreciation of diversity and their understanding of democracy.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that:
 - the progress pupils make in the afternoon activities is presented in a way that is easy to understand and reported to parents and carers in writing
 - improvement planning is more detailed, so that the effectiveness of the proposed action in raising pupils' achievement can be measured with precision
 - management committee members use improvement plans systematically to check the effectiveness of the action taken by the school leaders
 - appropriate action is taken to reduce the headteacher's workload.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Good leadership and management have improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection. As a result, pupils achieve well and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The school leaders, staff and volunteers are all committed Christians who ensure that the school's aims are met. They promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. They communicate high expectations of achievement and behaviour to pupils and contribute to raising pupils' ambitions. They ensure that pupils have equality of opportunities and there are no significant gaps in the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. The headteacher leads by example and has created a culture in which all staff are eager to develop their skills and willing to learn from each other. The appraisal of staff is used effectively to raise standards. Members of the staff have access to training that develops their skills to teach the ACE curriculum. However, the training aimed at improving teaching in the afternoon activities has been more limited. The criteria used to give feedback to staff who have been observed reflect the specificity of the ACE curriculum; however, they are not sufficiently detailed to develop teaching in the afternoon activities.
- Since the last inspection, the supplementary curriculum has further developed to promote pupils' social and enquiry skills and to prepare pupils for life beyond school. Some of the supplementary subjects, for example physical education (PE), personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), and information and communication technology (ICT) are taught weekly. Others, that include drama, music, art, design and technology, creative writing and practical science, are taught on a rolling programme. The overall curriculum meets requirements for preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Careers education is planned effectively and supported by an adequate range of work placements, and visits from professionals and to careers fairs. The school has recently secured the support of the careers service provided by the local authority to ensure that the advice given to pupils is up to date.
- Parents and carers are satisfied with all aspects of the school's work. They feel well informed of their children's overall progress. They receive termly written reports on their children's progress in the ACE curriculum, but only verbal reports of their progress in the supplementary subjects.
- Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and pupils feel safe. Pupils' behaviour is managed consistently well and their attendance is monitored rigorously. The premises provide suitable accommodation for effective teaching. Any complaints are handled fairly and promptly.
- The school has developed useful links in the community for the benefit of all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. It is currently seeking to forge links with good and outstanding local schools to develop the skills of staff and extend enrichment activities.
- The school analyses its performance honestly and accurately. Priorities for improvement are well defined. However, the timescales for bringing about improvements and the criteria for judging the effectiveness of the action taken are not always precise.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The proprietors have ensured that all the standards for independent schools are met. Financial resources are managed wisely to support the good achievement of all pupils.
 - The management committee works closely with the school and so its members know the school well. They are informed of all aspects of the school's work through monthly meetings. They understand the performance indicators used to measure pupils' progress. However, they rely too much on the headteacher's reports and do not check all aspects of the school's work with sufficient rigour. Systems are not yet sufficiently effective to help them check that the targets agreed to improve the school are met on time and that the action taken has a measurable impact on pupils' achievement. They are looking into restructuring the way they work to reduce the headteacher's workload.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good in the school and off site and contributes to an orderly working environment in which pupils can focus on learning. Most pupils show very high levels of self-discipline and motivation. They pride themselves in exceeding the expected goals and persevere when they have not quite mastered some skills or knowledge. They present their work neatly.

- Pupils who have social, emotional and behaviour difficulties have made good progress in improving their behaviour, and the need for serious sanctions reduces significantly in a short time after joining the school. They quickly take responsibility for their learning. Their progress records show that, once settled, they develop positive attitudes to learning, resulting in good academic progress.
- The attendance and punctuality of most pupils are good. Those pupils who had previous negative experiences of schooling, and were initially reluctant to come to school, now attend regularly.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and fostered through a Bible-centred education. Pupils are courteous and treat others with respect. They look after their classrooms and tidy up after play and practical activities.
- Pupils are helped to develop good social skills through interactive assemblies and afternoon activities. From the age of six onwards, they learn to take turns in sharing their views and ideas, and make lively and confident contributions. Pupils of different cultural backgrounds display harmonious relationships when having lunch or playing together at break times.
- Pupils' knowledge of public institutions and British democratic values is gained through lessons in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and educational visits. Pupils of secondary school age study British constitution which gives them an insight into the basis on which laws are made in England. However, pupils do not have sufficient practical experiences of how democracy works. The school has taken appropriate steps to ensure that where political ideas are discussed, a balanced view is presented.
- Pupils learn how to be responsible citizens within the school community through specific responsibilities which they all shoulder daily to maintain a clean and pleasant learning environment.
- In raising funds for charity, pupils have also developed advocacy and enterprise skills. For example, having baked and sold cakes for Comic Relief, they visited local businesses and gave free cakes away to promote the cause of the charity. This generated further donations.
- The older pupils participate in a national programme that encourages 16- and 17-year-olds to work with people from different backgrounds and contribute to projects that bring different communities together.
- Pupils learn about other religions and beliefs than theirs through the ACE curriculum, assemblies, PSHCE and educational visits. For example, they have had annual visits from representatives of the Jewish and Muslim faiths and have learnt directly from them about aspects of these faiths. However, these first-hand experiences are too limited in range to deepen pupils' appreciation of diversity.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Robust safeguarding procedures ensure that staff, volunteers and visitors are properly vetted. The staff are trained in child protection to appropriate standards and at the required intervals. The school can demonstrate that it records and follows up on any concerns diligently. Risks posed to pupils in the school and off site are carefully assessed. Members of staff are suitably trained in health and safety, fire safety and first aid.
- Safety education is taught in partnership with the police and local agencies, and includes road safety, safety in the community, e-safety and protection from gang culture. Pupils are aware of the risks posed by modern technology and know how to report incidents.
- Pupils feel safe from any form of harassment. They are very clear about what constitutes bullying and discrimination on grounds of gender, academic ability, disability, race, religion and sexual orientation. Pupils of secondary school age have explored stereotypes when discussing aspects of 'stop and search' police practices, and showed they could present balanced views on this subject.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress.
- The supervisors share a good understanding of how pupils progress through the ACE curriculum and new staff receive effective training in PACE work. The staff work cohesively to ensure that the correct decisions are made to enable pupils to make good progress. Initial assessments are used effectively to pitch work at the correct level. Close monitoring of pupils' work and frequent checks on their learning enable staff and pupils to identify gaps or misconceptions. Through effective questioning and timely one-to-one support, pupils are helped to consolidate their learning before moving on to the next step.
- Members of staff manage their time very effectively. They judge wisely when to intervene to support a pupil. This respects pupils' autonomy and so pupils learn to manage their own work very competently. For example, they use resources such as dictionaries and reference books and request help only when they need it.

- Good attention is paid to giving pupils a solid foundation in English and mathematics. Where pupils have significant gaps in literacy and numeracy, the staff ensure that they master the essential skills needed to access the rest of the curriculum. Reading skills are taught systematically.
- Members of staff have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, reminding pupils of their ambitious medium-term and longer-term targets. Consequently, pupils are motivated to work hard and try to exceed their goals. Daily homework builds well on pupils' learning.
- Pupils' progress in the ACE curriculum is tracked with great rigour. By keeping detailed records, staff monitor the breadth and depth of the curriculum covered by each pupil.
- Afternoon activities are planned effectively using National Curriculum guidance. Pupils benefit from some specialist teaching and make good progress in some subject areas, particularly where they are encouraged to develop their ideas through discussion. However, there are pockets of uneven progress where pupils of different ages and abilities are not always sufficiently challenged.
- Lesson evaluations and teacher assessments show what pupils have learned and understood through afternoon activities. However, this information is not collated in a way that gives a sufficiently clear overview of pupil progress over time in these subjects.
- Through the support of a specialist consultant, the staff are helped to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities effectively. Some staff have had training in dyslexia.
- Members of staff use an adequate variety of resources, including materials from educational websites, to support pupils' learning. They present pupils with opposing views on contentious subjects. For example, in science, pupils are encouraged to read about the evolution theory in addition to creationist views.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching, good attitudes to learning and the great emphasis placed on English and mathematics. They join the school with starting points that range from low for their age to just above levels expected for their age. Most pupils make good progress in relation to these starting points, particularly in English and mathematics, and some make outstanding progress. For some pupils, progress is also good or outstanding in ICT, PE, science, and social studies.
- Pupils make rapid progress in their reading, writing and numeracy skills throughout the school because initial assessments are used very effectively to provide programmes of study that match their needs well. The ACE curriculum promotes pupils' reading skills in every subject, with a systematic focus on meaning, vocabulary, spelling, grammar and comprehension of text. Twice a week, all pupils also use a computer-based reading programme aimed at diagnosing any weaknesses and accelerating their reading skills.
- Pupils are encouraged through afternoon group sessions to read a broad range of books in addition to their PACE work, including English classic authors. Pupils have benefited from creative writing lessons. For example, by creating news items on accidents, crimes or disasters, or writing imaginative stories, they have learnt to write for different audiences and in different contexts, and to develop their ideas.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are promoted effectively through interactive assemblies in which they share their views and experiences, and through supplementary subjects such as citizenship. Pupils aged from 11 to 18 years are taught to develop their oracy skills when preparing for public speaking examinations.
- Pupils who joined with literacy and numeracy levels that were above age expectations are fast tracked through the ACE curriculum so that they are constantly stretched. By the end of their secondary school education, these pupils take the international Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE) at general level which is recognised as equivalent to nine GCSE full courses at A* to C grades. Pupils who have completed their secondary education at the school have either moved on to a college of their choice or stayed on to study towards the ICCE at advanced level. This qualification is recognised as A-level qualifications in the United Kingdom.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities are supported well to overcome their barriers to learning. This support includes help from attentive supervisors, backed by carefully reviewed individual learning plans. These pupils have generally made good progress, including those who have been diagnosed as being dyslexic.
- Pupils who have joined the school with levels of literacy and numeracy that were significantly below age expectations are catching up quickly. This is because the gaps in their knowledge and skills are identified and filled systematically.
- A very small minority of pupils have only made the expected progress in the ACE curriculum. In addition, not all pupils make good progress in some of the supplementary subjects. This is why achievement is not outstanding.

The sixth form provision**is good**

- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress owing to good teaching and close monitoring of their work. Students currently in the sixth form joined with low starting points and are on track to achieve well in the ICCE general certificate.
- The curriculum is sufficiently broad and flexible to provide academic and vocational paths. Each student has a tailor-made study programme based on initial assessments and individual choices. The more academic students enter courses leading to the intermediate or advanced ICCE qualifications. Less academic students can embark on courses leading to GCSE equivalent qualifications, and life skills and employability qualifications.
- In the last four years, five students have completed their post-16 education at the school and they have gained A or B grades in their intermediate or advanced certificates of ICCE. They all have gained entry to United Kingdom universities on courses that include medicine, accounting, business and ICT. One former student reflected on how 'my education at the school has taught me to manage my time', so that he was well prepared for university study.
- Students are self-motivated and demonstrate good attitudes to learning. Their attendance is good. They learn how to keep safe and healthy through PSHCE. Students serve the local community and discover their talents by engaging in citizenship projects.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good and ensures students achieve well. Students are properly safeguarded. They receive well-considered and impartial careers advice. The sixth form is not outstanding for three main reasons. Some students do not make good progress in all subjects; the school has identified that it does not provide a sufficiently broad range of work placements to match the aspirations of all students; and the range of enrichment activities is not sufficiently wide to deepen students' appreciation of diversity and understanding of democracy.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	134580
Inspection number	447172
DfE registration number	308/6068

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Day primary and secondary Christian school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	3
Number of part time pupils	1
Proprietor	New Living Ministries (NLM) Trust
Chair	Gareth Hawkes
Headteacher	Paul Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	6 April 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,970
Telephone number	020 8803 6517
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