

Inspection of PhoenixPlace

7a Badsworth Road, London SE5 0JG

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 December 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff create a calm and safe environment where pupils are happy to learn. This is a caring and nurturing place where pupils receive the positive encouragement and the pastoral support they need to feel emotionally secure and socially confident. Staff have high expectations of pupils. The school is successful in ensuring that pupils are prepared suitably for the next stage of their education or employment, both academically and emotionally.

Staff expect high levels of conduct and behaviour. Interactions are built upon strong, respectful and trusting relationships. Pupils use good manners towards adults and each other. There is a purposeful and orderly atmosphere in the school. Routines are well established, including lunchtimes, where pupils socialise well with their peers and staff. Pupils respond positively to the school's approach to managing behaviour. Pupils reflect routinely on their own behaviour at the end of each lesson. They are committed to their learning and know how to study effectively.

Pupils know and understand the school values, including empathy, ambition, curiosity and humility. This underpins the school's approach to pupils' character development. Pupils become confident and independent when using a range of tools to manage their own feelings and emotions.

Parents and carers speak positively about the school. They proudly celebrate that staff help their children to attend school regularly and participate in the stimulating learning experiences offered.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils enter the school at various times of the school year, with many having negative prior experiences of schooling. Some have also been out of education for long periods of time. Staff identify what pupils know, remember and can do swiftly. Staff help pupils to catch up the knowledge they need across a range of subjects. Teachers make appropriate adaptations to teaching to meet the range of pupils' needs and reduce barriers to learning.

Where subjects are well embedded, the content clearly builds on what pupils are expected to learn systematically. For instance, the English curriculum is based on a range of high-quality texts. Pupils enjoy reading independently for sustained periods of time. They are often given opportunities to read texts aloud. Pupils in Year 10 analyse how writers use language to achieve literary effects and influence readers. Key stage 3 pupils use different operations of number to complete mathematical calculations using fractions and decimals. Pupils learn to use subject-specific terminology appropriately and confidently. A minority of subjects are less developed, and here content is less secure. In these subjects, key content is not taught consistently well, which limits pupils' development of their knowledge and skills.

Pupils are supported well in gaining a range of qualifications, including GCSE mathematics, English and functional skills. The school provides a variety of useful careers education and guidance. Pupils learn to complete application forms, generate curriculum vitae and attend mock interviews with staff and external partners. Staff prepare pupils for adulthood and independent living well. Pupils know how to stay safe when using public transport, online programmes and social media.

Staff have a thorough knowledge of the pupils, their context and needs. They use the information in the pupils' education, health and care plans effectively. This helps to ensure the support provided and strategies used are customised to each individual pupil. Pupils benefit greatly from the understanding, support and guidance staff and other therapeutic professionals provide, including access to mentoring and counselling.

Staff deal calmly and sensitively with low-level disruptions or when pupils find it hard to manage their own behaviour. Staff are intuitive and responsive. They know when and how to intervene to minimise the risk of pupils becoming disengaged, or frustrations from escalating. Staff use a range of approaches to ensure pupils are motivated to take part in activities skilfully. This includes offering timely movement breaks and various other distraction strategies such as taking deep breaths and accessing the sensory room. Pupils respond positively to adult interactions. Given its context, the school does all it reasonably can to promote regular attendance and punctuality. Staff work tirelessly and closely with parents to help pupils remain positive about attending school. Staff use genuine praise to celebrate pupils' efforts, achievements and attendance.

High priority is given to promoting pupils' emotional well-being. The school makes sure that the personal, social, health and economic education programmes enable pupils to learn about British values and protected characteristics. Pupils learn to share their views and opinions when discussing age-appropriate themes, such as healthy relationships, personal hygiene and sexual health. They appreciate outings, including visits to museums, theatres and places of worship.

Staff are extremely passionate about the school and the pupils who attend. The school has elicited the enthusiasm and commitment of staff to be passionate about what they do. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support they receive from senior leaders and each other. The school's focus on pupils' well-being is extended to its staff, and they value this greatly. Leaders know the strengths and the next steps needed to realise their aspirations. For example, some curriculum developments are new. While these initiatives are having a positive impact, they need more time to become fully embedded. Leaders are aware of, and they are addressing, some pockets of inconsistency, particularly in relation to teachers' knowledge of how the curriculum is taught in some subjects. The proprietor has ensured that the school meets the independent school standards. This includes the compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, which forms the bedrock of the inclusive ethos of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Although improving, there are still inconsistencies in the implementation of the curriculum in some subjects. This means that pupils' learning in some subjects is not deepened. The school should continue to develop staff's pedagogical knowledge, so that teachers are supported to gain the expertise they need to teach all subjects consistently.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	141701
DfE registration number	210/6007
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	10342101
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Number of part-time pupils	Fewer than 5
Proprietor	Sophie Nelson
Headteacher	Sophie Nelson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,00 to £79,000
Telephone number	0207 7037 189
Website	www.phoenixplace.co.uk
Email address	info@phoenixplace.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 to 24 November 2022

Information about this school

- PhoenixPlace is an independent special secondary school for girls aged 11 to 16.
- Most pupils have education, health and care plans for their social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Pupils join the school at different times during the academic year. Some pupils stay at the school for short-term placements, before returning to their mainstream school.
- The school is registered to admit up to 36 pupils.
- The school occupies two buildings. The main site is located at 7a Badsworth Street, SE5 0JG and the second site is c/o Brandon Baptist Church in Southwark.
- The school's last inspection was in November 2022, when it was judged as requires improvement and some of the independent school standards were not met.
- Since the last inspection, a deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2024.
- The school's sole proprietor is supported by a school advisory panel.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- Pupils access some of their physical education curriculum at the Brandon site and Camberwell Leisure Centre, London, SE5 8TS, which has changing and shower facilities.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, senior leaders and a range of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading; mathematics; history; and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and considered pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in some other subjects.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, pupils and staff, through discussions and responses to the Ofsted Parent View and staff survey.

Inspection team

Lascelles Haughton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Neary

Ofsted Inspector

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