

# Inspection of Phoenix Bay School

The Pavillion, 3 Seale Hayne, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 6NQ

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Inspection dates: 30 April to 2 May 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are at the heart of Phoenix Bay School. They thrive because the school is determined for them to achieve the very best. Pupils describe the significant impact the school has on them. They say that they would be on a very different path now if they did not attend this school. Parents say that the school fully understands the needs of their children. They agree that it goes above and beyond to ensure that their children get the education they deserve; something they thought was very unlikely before attending Phoenix Bay.

Following significant periods of disengagement with learning, pupils now want to be in school and they appreciate the value of learning. Pupils get the time, space and support that they need to understand their barriers to education. Staff are skilled in giving pupils the strategies they need to be successful and become confident, self-aware individuals with aspirations for their future.

There are high expectations of pupils from the very start. Pupils strive to meet these because of strong and trusted relationships with staff. Pupils value how well staff know them. They feel safe and cared for. Pupils' conduct and the way they respond to challenges and interactions with others have significantly improved from their previous experiences. This is because of the very successful wider development offer.

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

The school has made significant developments since its previous standard inspection. The school's ambition for pupils to succeed is paramount. Pupils benefit from an individualised curriculum. The school ensures that there are extensive opportunities for staff to reflect and share good practice. There is a culture of trust and respect. Consequently, staff feel safe to challenge each other in the academic, social and emotional provision they deliver to get the very best for pupils.

The role of governance does not yet provide the necessary challenge for the school to provide the most effective academic curriculum offer. At times, systems and processes that are in place to support curriculum delivery can lack clarity about their purpose and impact. Furthermore, they can create an unnecessary workload. Despite this, pupils learn successfully because staff have a precise and detailed knowledge and understanding of each pupil and the necessary subject knowledge to fulfil this.

The curriculum for pupils at key stage 4, who have been with the school the longest, enables them to achieve ambitious outcomes in a range of different subjects. These include subjects such as English and mathematics, but also vocational subjects such as barbering. However, the curriculum for younger pupils is not as well established. It lacks clarity and precision about what the school wants pupils to know and remember. There is not a clear progression into what pupils learn at key stage 4. This limits the progress some pupils make. The 'Big Picture' curriculum is beginning

to address this. Despite this, the school has not fully established how this can support teachers to know what to teach and subsequently check how well pupils are progressing.

The school understands the importance of reading and the need to promote how pupils view reading. Pupils value the access they have to a wide range of books. They describe how staff encourage them to read. The small number of pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read get the support they need to be successful.

The school has a secure awareness of pupils' barriers to attendance. It is highly ambitious that all pupils start on a full-time timetable and are fully included in the Phoenix Bay family from day one. The school is making demonstrable improvements and ensures that tackling attendance is 'everyone's business'. Pupils now want to be in school because of the established culture and ethos.

The school's approach to preparing pupils for their next steps is exceptional. Pupils are accepting of the diverse needs of their peers. Staff encourage pupils to embody tolerance and respect for difference. Staff skilfully provide clear boundaries and supportive challenge. As a result, pupils become increasingly independent and resilient. The school builds pupils' strength of character. This comes through actions such as plentiful opportunities for self-reflection and to debate their views and opinions. As a result, pupils view each day as a fresh start and ensure that the recovery from incidents of upset or anxiety does not impact negatively. This prepares them well for the next stage in their education and for adulthood. Pupils receive independent careers advice, information and guidance which the school strengthens further. The school meets the independent school standards in full and the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- In some areas of the curriculum, there is not enough clarity and specificity of the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember. Furthermore, there is not a clear progression between the curriculum at key stage 3 and key stage 4. This limits the progress some pupils make. The school must ensure that the curriculum clearly identifies the important knowledge it wants pupils to learn at each key stage and strengthen how they check pupils' progress.
- Those responsible for governance do not provide sufficient challenge to strengthen the academic offer that pupils get. As a result, they do not hold the most accurate overview of the quality of education, and leaders are not always held to account for the impact they make in their areas of responsibility. This leads to unnecessary workload and a lack of clarity about what is making a difference to pupils' education. The proprietor must work with those responsible

for governance to ensure that leaders get the necessary challenge of and support in their areas of responsibility to increase the impact of their decisions and actions on pupils' education.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148761
<b>DfE registration number</b>	878/6090
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	10321517
<b>Type of school</b>	Independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent day school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	15
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Ross Banks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ross Banks
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£52,000 to £54,800
<b>Telephone number</b>	01803 220750
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.phoenixbay.co.uk">www.phoenixbay.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:hello@phoenixbay.co.uk">hello@phoenixbay.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 to 17 November 2022

## Information about this school

- The school has had a progress monitoring visit since the last standard inspection. This took place on 6 July 2023.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and/or mental health needs. Some pupils also have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and/or autism. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The proprietor is also the principal of the school. Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a deputy principal and increased the size of the advisory board to strengthen leadership and management of the school.

## 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.

Inspections are a point in time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the deputy principal, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead and the school business manager. In addition, inspectors spoke with the chair of the advisory board and representatives from two local authorities.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education (PSHE). For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons (not in PSHE), spoke to staff and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors sampled individual pupils to gather evidence about the quality of education.
- A member of staff was present when inspectors spoke with pupils. This was agreed in order to support pupils to engage with inspectors and reduce their anxiety.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- Inspectors analysed school documentation, including leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement. Inspectors scrutinised a range of policies and procedures, including those that relate to the curriculum, special educational needs and/or disabilities, safeguarding and admissions.
- Inspectors checked the safety and suitability of the premises. They considered risk assessments and the policies in place to promote the well-being of pupils.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments, as well as speaking with parents face to face. Inspectors evaluated responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Leanne Thirlby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Victoria Griffin

His Majesty's Inspector

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