

Inspection of The Phoenix Primary School

Leinster Road, Laindon, Basildon, Essex SS15 5NQ

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 June 2025

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The head of school is Marie Kirkham. The school is part of the Lee Chapel Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sue Jackson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Craig O'Callaghan. The trust board delegates some functions to a local governing body, which is chaired by Jon Hann.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since July 2019. The school received an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Act on 17 and 18 April 2024. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils smile broadly as they walk happily into school. They rise to the high expectations set in this warm and welcoming environment. Most pupils achieve well, personally and academically, especially in their writing. They are extremely proud of their school and eager to show off their work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn well alongside their classmates. Pupils build the knowledge and skills needed to prepare them well for their next stage in education.

Typically, pupils attend school regularly because they enjoy being here. Overall, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are impressive. Pupils who struggle to manage their emotions are supported sensitively to improve. Pupils know they are safe in school. They trust staff to help if they are worried. In the early years, children respond quickly to staff guidance and the expected routines.

The school's values of aspiration, enjoyment, resilience and respect are reflected in daily school life. Pupils are kind and thoughtful in their relationships with others. They enjoy the opportunities to contribute to the school community in roles, including as junior governors, prefects and pupil librarians. During sports day, pupil sports leaders, for example, were exemplary role models for their younger peers.

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

Together with the trust and governors, the school is highly ambitious for all pupils to achieve their very best. Ongoing curriculum refinements continue to improve the overall high-quality offer. Pupils achieve at least as well as others in national tests at the end of Year 6. In 2024, they achieved significantly better than pupils nationally in their writing. Pupils' achievement, including for those who are disadvantaged, continues to improve.

The school's ambitious vision is reflected in the well-considered curriculum. This builds logically on previous learning from Nursery through to the end of Year 6. Pupils with SEND are well supported. Early identification of needs results in thoughtful curriculum adaptations so they thrive alongside their peers.

Typically, pupils benefit from high-quality learning experiences. Occasionally, however, activities are not as closely matched as they could be to what pupils know and can do. This means that, sometimes, a few pupils' learning slows as they wait for others to catch up.

The school champions the joys of reading. Books and stories are at the heart of the curriculum. Securing pupils' reading fluency is a priority. Early reading is well taught. Children listen carefully and respond energetically as they match letters and sounds. Extra help is readily available if they need it. Refinements to the teaching of writing mean that pupils are increasingly confident to write for different purposes and audiences as they move through year groups. This begins from the early years as children learn the importance of pencil grip and accurate letter formation.

In a few subjects beyond English and mathematics, ongoing curriculum changes are more recent. Arrangements to evaluate pupils' learning are still developing. This means that, while checks on learning are frequent, staff do not always have the detailed information that they need to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly.

Most pupils behave exceptionally well. The school works in partnership with families to ensure that pupils attend as often as they should. In the early years, children learn and play sociably together. They take turns and share in interactions with others. Positive relationships are established quickly across year groups. Pupils know they are safe in school. They speak thoughtfully about how they are taught to manage risk, including online and in the community.

Pupils' personal development is well promoted. The school's values are reflected across the wide-ranging offer. Pupils benefit from the interesting visits designed to enrich their learning. Reception class children, for example, were delighted by the recent trip to a local aquarium. Pupils understand the principles of fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. They spoke excitedly about their experience of a 'mock trial', and how they balanced the evidence to determine a judgement. Pupils enjoy the many clubs on offer. Further action is designed to ensure that even more pupils take advantage of the opportunities available.

Leaders, governors and the trust are relentless in securing the ambitious vision for pupils to achieve well. They take decisive action when change is needed. Staff are well trained. Their workloads and well-being are thoughtfully managed. Safeguarding roles are understood and rigorously implemented. Parents and carers, including those of pupils with SEND, value the school's welcoming, caring and typically high-quality experiences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, activities are not as closely matched as they could be to what pupils know and can do. This means that for some pupils learning slows as they wait for others to catch up. The school and the trust should ensure that staff are confident in using their knowledge of what pupils know and can do, so that pupils are supported routinely to achieve their best.
- In a few foundation subjects, curriculum changes are more recent. Where this is the case, approaches to checking pupils' learning are still evolving. This means that the school does not always have the detailed information needed to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills quickly. The school and the trust should complete

ongoing curriculum evaluations and implement further changes needed promptly, so that pupils experience the same high-quality in all aspects of their learning.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143128
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10378551
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	698
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Craig O'Callaghan
CEO of the trust	Sue Jackson
Head of school	Marie Kirkham
Website	www.phoenix-pri.essex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 April 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There are no significant changes since the ungraded inspection in April 2024.
- The school makes occasional use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

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

- Inspectors discussed the continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in the following subjects: English, including early reading, geography, art and design, mathematics, science and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- The lead inspector spoke with the CEO of the trust and the chair of governors.
- Meetings were held with the head of school, the school's other leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, other school staff and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised behaviour logs, attendance records, minutes of governors' and trustees' meetings, school improvement plans and school policies.
- The responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, were reviewed. These were considered alongside the free-text responses from parents. Inspectors also took account of responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for pupils and spoke informally with staff, pupils and parents during the school day.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Alice Early	Ofsted Inspector
Danny Wagstaff	Ofsted Inspector
Aimee Bray	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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