

Plantsbrook School

Upper Holland Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B72 1RB

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes at GCSE are not improving quickly enough for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improvements have not yet not been strong enough to overcome a dip in outcomes that followed the previous inspection.
- Leaders and governors have an over-generous view of the overall effectiveness of the school, including the quality of teaching.
- Governors do not sufficiently challenge leaders on outcomes for different pupil groups. The impact of pupil premium is not sufficiently evaluated.
- Careers guidance at key stage 4 is limited.
- Monitoring of teaching does not focus rigorously enough on the progress different pupil groups make over time.
- Teachers do not take account consistently enough of the needs of different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, most-able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, when they are planning or reviewing lessons.
- Teachers' written feedback to pupils does not consistently conform to the school's policy.
- Fixed-term exclusions are high for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders promote a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils report that any bullying incidents are dealt with effectively.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. They enjoy coming to school, are highly motivated and willing to learn.
- Attendance is well above the national average for all groups of pupils and improving further.
- In French provision, pupils' uptake at GCSE and outcomes are very high.
- The sixth form is good. Good teaching, support and careers guidance ensures that pupils achieve well and go on successfully to further education, training or employment.
- Pupils with sight problems are supported to access lessons and participate fully in all aspects of school life.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes at GCSE more rapidly, especially in English, for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by ensuring:
 - teachers use information about disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities more effectively to plan to meet their needs in lessons
 - when teachers provide written feedback to pupils it is in line with the school's policy
 - pupils, including the most able pupils, have the opportunity to work in greater depth
 - teachers' and pupils' expectations are high in the accuracy and presentation of written work.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors have a more realistic view of the schools' strengths and weaknesses, including in teaching
 - governors evaluate the impact of additional funding for pupil premium and special educational needs and/or disabilities to determine the impact of activities intended to raise pupil achievement
 - monitoring and evaluation of teaching over time is more rigorous and focuses on the progress of pupils, including pupil groups
 - careers guidance is as effective at key stage 4 as it is in the sixth form
 - the rate of fixed-term exclusions for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is reduced further and pupils are clearer about the boundaries for a fixed-term exclusion.

An external review of governance and an external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- After the last inspection leaders maintained high outcomes for pupils until 2014 when there was a decline in the progress pupils made from key stage 2 to 4. This was more marked in English and for disadvantaged pupils. Improvements have not yet been swift or rigorous enough.
- High turnover of leadership in English and in achievement coordinators have contributed to why outcomes have not improved quickly enough for Year 11 pupils in 2016 in their provisional examination GCSE results.
- Although the school has a written pupil premium strategy in place, measures taken to date have not secured rapid enough improvement for disadvantaged pupils in diminishing the difference in outcomes with other pupils nationally. Previous small cohorts of disadvantaged pupils had done very well at GCSE but as the cohort has expanded in size leaders have been less successful in responding to the increasing level of challenge of larger cohorts. Consequently, the impact of pupil premium funding has been limited.
- Until recently, outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities compared favourably with other pupils nationally at GCSE. However, the progress of those pupils currently in school is not as strong. Evaluation of the impact of support for them is at an early stage of development following a recent change of leadership.
- Leaders are not ensuring that teachers take account of information about disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in their planning. Leaders place too much emphasis on the attainment of pupils rather than how much progress they are making. As a result, leaders have an over-generous view of teaching through performance management, based on pupils' high attainment at GCSE.
- Leaders have not ensured that careers guidance in key stage 4 is preparing pupils well for making decisions about the next phase of their education.
- Leaders have overseen the new building work well to ensure minimum disruption to pupils. They have maintained a calm environment where high standards of behaviour have been maintained.
- Provision for most-able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in triple science and French ensures that they do very well in these subjects. Most-able pupils can take a wide range of subjects at GCSE and in the sixth form. They appreciate additional support sessions, including in science and history.
- Leaders have managed the transition while the new school is being built on the same site extremely well to ensure that there is a calm and orderly environment. Disruption to learning has been minimised.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity well for pupils with sight problems. They are well provided for and supported to ensure that they take an active part in lessons and wider school life.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced, evidenced by the wide range of academic and vocational courses on offer to pupils. It is regularly reviewed to ensure it is enabling pupils to develop and progress.
- There are numerous extra-curricular activities on offer, including music, drama, debating and sport. Pupils spoken to thought that these could be better publicised. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well where there are additional costs of activities inside or out of school.
- Leaders promote pupils' behaviour and personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, not least in the way pupils support their peers who have sight problems. British values are presented throughout the curriculum, which prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Detailed arrangements are in place to help teachers to improve if they are identified as requiring additional support.
- Leaders have ensured that the Year 7 catch-up premium funding is enabling the very large majority of pupils to catch up in literacy and numeracy by the time they start in Year 8.
- The very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school was well led and managed and would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance of the school

- Governors have an over-generous view of the school's effectiveness. They do not sufficiently hold leaders to account for outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, nor do they sufficiently evaluate the impact of additional funding for these groups of pupils.
- Governors have the following strengths:
 - they are well trained to ensure that leaders fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities
 - they have already recognised that outcomes are not yet high enough and are determined to tackle the issue
 - they have overseen the arrangements for the new building in order to secure improvements in the provision for the future
 - they are very supportive of leaders and active in school life.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in school. All incidents are treated with rigour to ensure pupils' well-being and safety. Risk assessments concerning the building site have been carried out thoroughly to ensure that pupils remain safe. Areas are securely fenced off to prevent unauthorised access. The site is a safe environment for pupils despite the constraints on space caused by the construction work. Staff are well trained to carry out their responsibilities. Policies and procedures are kept well up to date. Attendance and admissions registers are fully in place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is too variable across years and subjects. Teachers do not sufficiently take account of information provided to them about disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in their planning. The quality of support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is variable. As a result, pupils from these groups are not making progress rapidly enough over time.
- Teachers' written feedback to pupils does not conform consistently enough to the school's policy. Too often teachers do the corrections for pupils so they cannot learn from their mistakes or they allow incorrect work to go unchecked. Where extension tasks are set, invariably pupils either do not complete them or, if they do, teachers do not indicate if they have checked them.
- Pupils, including those who are most able and disadvantaged, do not consistently receive an appropriate challenge or opportunity to work in greater depth if they have successfully completed a piece of work.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, for example in mathematics. In languages, teachers use their knowledge to good effect in French. In lessons, they set high expectations that the target language should be used by teachers and pupils throughout wherever possible, including for incidental language, regardless of pupils' abilities.
- Relationships with pupils are good. This ensures that classrooms are calm environments where teachers manage behaviour well.
- Verbal assessment and feedback during lessons are good where teachers use open-ended questions to check pupils' understanding.
- Homework is set regularly across a range of subjects to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils who receive support from the school's academic coaches reported that they had made progress as result of their input.
- Pupils with sight problems are able to access lessons as a result of the high quality of the resources and support provided by adults and pupils.
- Parents who responded to Parent View agreed overwhelmingly that their children were taught well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are happy with the quality of the support they receive and the lengths teachers and other adults go to provide additional support.
- Pupils are confident to speak up in lessons and are developing their oral skills well. They are well informed about politics, democracy and the rule of law. During tutor time they were keen to express their forthright views on the outcome of the US presidential

election.

- Assemblies and tutorials fully cover aspects of safety, including bullying, e-safety, peer pressure, grooming and extremism. Those pupils spoken to said they feel safe and secure in school despite all the building work going on around them.
- They reported that they feel well looked after. They know who to go to if they are worried about anything. They are kept aware by the school of any local issues in the community that could have an impact on their safety.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school keeps their children safe.
- Pupils reported that on occasions bullying does happen but is dealt with well by the school and that appropriate sanctions are in place.
- Pupils' books appeared neat and well presented at the start of term but in recent weeks the quality and accuracy of their written work has declined.
- Pupils spoken to by inspectors said that careers advice was limited in key stage 4.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good both in lessons and at breaktimes around the school. They have responded very well to the upheaval of the building work on site that has restricted their movement and access. The school is a calm and orderly environment.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to visitors. They are proud of the school and wear their uniform with pride. They show respect for others with differences and are especially supportive to pupils who have sight problems.
- In lessons they are keen and willing to learn, even if the pace of learning dips or work set is not challenging enough. This rarely leads to low-level disruption because of the good relationships they have with teachers.
- The rate of attendance for all pupils and all groups of pupils is high compared to the national average and is continuing to improve. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are eager to learn.
- Nearly all parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school ensures that their children are well behaved.
- The rate of permanent exclusions is very low.
- The proportion of fixed-term exclusions has fallen and the rewards system has had a significant impact on encouraging good behaviour.
- Although falling, fixed-term exclusions are still disproportionately high for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils reported that they were not clear what the boundaries for exclusions were.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- After the last inspection, outcomes for pupils remained high until 2014 when there was a fall in the progress pupils made from key stage 2 to 4. This was most marked in English and for disadvantaged pupils. In the most recent validated examinations at

GCSE, in 2015, progress remained low for these pupils, as it has done in the latest provisional 2016 results.

- There are signs of improvements for disadvantaged pupils currently in school up to Year 10 but in Year 11 these are not yet rapid enough for this group or for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Many most-able pupils make at least expected progress but there are times when a lack of challenge hinders progress
- Pupils join the school at an already above-average level of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the start of Year 7. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is consistently above average for pupils, based on the proportion who achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. Most-able disadvantaged pupils do well in science subjects.
- Pupils do very well in their progress and attainment in French, where an increasingly large majority of the pupils take the subject up to GCSE.
- Until very recently, progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has compared favourably with other pupils nationally.
- Progress is improving for current pupils in Years 8, 9 and 10, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- In Year 7, the accelerated reading programme, funded by Year 7 catch up premium, is having an impact on raising pupils' reading ages and encouraging them to read more regularly.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students get a good deal in the sixth form, which is well led and where the requirements of 16 to 19 study programmes are met. Leaders set high expectations and monitor closely the progress of different groups of students.
- Outcomes are good and improving both in academic and vocational courses, where the quality of teaching over time is also good. Teaching is effective and teachers set out clear expectations for students and develop their learning skills well, including in French and English literature.
- Students value the additional 'catch-up' support they receive, especially in science and history. Their attitudes to learning are good.
- Students have the English and mathematical skills required to achieve well in more challenging courses. Very few have to retake GCSE English and mathematics.
- Careers advice in the sixth form is good, with an attached dedicated careers adviser on site. Tutor groups receive weekly careers bulletins. A careers week takes place at the end of Year 12, including visits to universities.
- An enrichment programme enables students to achieve additional qualifications, for example as student leaders and in first aid.
- Retention rates, excluding foreign exchange students, compare favourably with the national average. Destination routes show that a very high proportion of students go

on to further education, training or employment.

- Students are well prepared for their next steps in the way their personal, social and employability skills are developed.
- Safeguarding arrangements are as effective as they are in the rest of the school.
- Students with sight problems are able to access courses in the sixth room as a result of the support and specialist equipment which the school provides.
- Not all students have taken up the opportunity to participate in work experience.

School details

Unique reference number	137053
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10025592

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,293
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	221
Appropriate authority	The local governing body
Chair	David Griffiths
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Tracy Campbell
Telephone number	01213 627310
Website	http://web.plantsbrookschool.co.uk/
Email address	enquiry@plantsbrookschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 September 2011

Information about this school

- Plantsbrook is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is about one in 16, which is below average, although numbers on the register are rising. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan is high because of the school's specialist provision for pupils with sight problems.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average. The percentage who do not speak English as their first language is below average.

- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average but rising over time. About one in five pupils in school are eligible for free school meals. There has been a rising trend in recent years.
- The proportion of pupils who leave the school mid-way through a key stage is very low.
- Both the current headteacher and chair of the academy trust were in post at the time of the last inspection.
- There have been several changes of leadership since the last inspection in English and in achievement coordinators. A new special educational needs coordinator was appointed a year ago.
- There are no pupils in alternative provision.
- Based on their 2015 results, the school meets the government's floor standards. These are the minimum standards expected for pupils' learning and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school meets its statutory requirements to publish specific information on its website.
- The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons or parts of lessons, of which 27 were jointly observed with either the headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons and other activities, for example to look at pupils' books, talk to pupils and observe an assembly.
- Inspectors heard pupils read during lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, other members of staff and five groups of pupils. The lead inspector spoke to the chair of the academy trust by telephone and met the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 198 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including the headteacher's report to the local governing body, the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and school information on pupils' recent attainment and progress.
- Inspectors also considered behaviour and attendance information, policies and procedures including special educational needs, pupil premium, and Year 7 catch-up funding, safeguarding, child protection and behaviour.
- At the time of the inspection the construction of a new school building was in progress on the same site as the current one.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Andrea Quigley	Ofsted Inspector
Gwendoline Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
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Herminder Channa	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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