

Town Junior School

Ebrook Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B72 1NX

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment have not been consistently good since the academy was formed.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of pupils. They do not consistently use information about what pupils know, understand and can do to set tasks to deepen pupils' learning and help them make rapid progress.
- Learning time is not always used productively. At times, pupils are unclear about what they are learning, and they are given few opportunities to deepen their understanding by exploring concepts in depth.
- Some pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and middle-ability pupils, have not made the progress of which they are capable.
- End-of-key-stage assessments indicate that pupils have not made good progress in mathematics over time. At the end of Year 6, progress in writing was slow in 2016 and progress in reading was slow in 2017.
- New middle leaders have not had time to fully develop their skills. Recently introduced initiatives are not yet fully embedded or evaluated so they have not led to good outcomes.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are taking effective action to improve the school.
- Outcomes are improving. The most able pupils are challenged to make good progress and outcomes in writing improved last year. As a result of targeted action, current pupils are making better progress in reading than previously.
- Behaviour has improved considerably since the academy was formed. Pupils are polite, considerate and respectful. They enjoy positive relationships with staff and other pupils.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are happy, safe and well looked after.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff are well trained and know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare.
- Attendance is consistently above national averages and most pupils are rarely absent.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is deeply embedded in the curriculum. Pupils display strong moral values and they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently strong and leads to rapid progress for all groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and middle-ability pupils, by ensuring that all staff:
 - have high expectation of what pupils can do
 - use the information that is available to plan activities to challenge all groups of pupils to make rapid progress from their different starting points
 - set tasks that focus on learning and give pupils opportunities to explore concepts in depth
 - use learning time effectively
 - further improve outcomes in reading, writing and particularly mathematics
 - have training that is required to help them further improve their practice, particularly in the effective use of assessment information.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - systematically reviewing, evaluating, refining and embedding actions so that they further improve outcomes
 - developing the leadership skills of new middle leaders.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are taking effective action to improve the school.
- Leaders are ambitious for the school and its pupils and lead by example. Positive relationships between leaders, staff and pupils allow all members of the school community to work together to improve the school.
- Behaviour has improved considerably since the academy was formed and outcomes are improving. Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that the most able pupils are consistently challenged to achieve good outcomes. Leaders' focused work on improving the quality of pupils' writing had a marked impact in the 2017 outcomes, and similar initiatives to develop a love of reading are having a positive impact on current pupils.
- Systems and structures are now in place to further improve the school. However, they are not totally embedded and relatively new initiatives have not been fully evaluated in terms of impact. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes are not yet good.
- Middle leadership is developing and some aspects of the school's work, for example provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and safeguarding, are very well led. Plans are in place to enhance aspects of leadership that extend beyond the headteacher and the deputy headteacher even further.
- Staff value the training they are given and newly qualified teachers are well supported. The management of staff's performance is used effectively to help teachers, teaching assistants and other staff further improve aspects of their practice. However, decisive action is taken if staff do not meet the expectations of leaders.
- The curriculum has been intelligently and deliberately redesigned to offer breadth and depth and meet the needs of the pupils. It is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as the recent trip to Stratford-upon-Avon. It has had a significant impact on pupils' behaviour and well-being, but the delivery of the curriculum has yet to secure good outcomes.
- The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Activities to make pupils think about the consequences of actions, explore different cultures, reflect on their experiences, work with other people and develop a sense of awe and wonder are deeply embedded in the curriculum. Pupils also display strong moral values and they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively to improve outcomes for targeted pupils. The primary physical education and sport funding is also used well. Staff have been trained and supported to confidently deliver a wider range of physical activities so participation in sport has increased.

- Pupil premium funding has led to some improvements in outcomes for disadvantaged

pupils. However, the difference in the level of attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils at the end of Year 6 remains too wide. Leaders use the funding for a range of support and interventions and have plans to measure their impact more precisely across the school.

- Leaders and staff communicate well with parents. Regular, good-quality newsletters and meetings contribute to this. Most parents are happy with the school and a very large majority would recommend it to another parent.
- The trust has offered effective support and challenge to the school. It provides human resources and financial services and offered useful support to leaders, particularly with regard to behaviour management, when the academy was formed. As time has progressed, it has not needed to offer as much direct support. However, the trust has commissioned a national leader of education (NLE) to deliver tailored support and challenge. The NLE has provided a good service which has focused on leadership development and improving teaching, learning and assessment. However, the impact of this work is not yet fully evident as it is relatively recent.

Governance of the school

- The local governing board reports to the Plantsbrook Learning Trust Board. Both provide valuable aspects of governance for the school.
- Governors have the skills, knowledge and experience to support leaders and hold them to close account. They ask challenging questions about the range of information that they receive and delve deeper when necessary. They are dedicated and enthusiastic and they are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are ambitious for the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are very well trained and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities with regard to keeping pupils safe. They have received thorough training and regular updates, and policies and procedures used in the school are robust. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare and they are clear about their legal duties.
- This aspect of the school's work is very well led. Record keeping is thorough and referrals are made promptly. Concerns are followed up and outside agencies are used appropriately. Careful checks are made on staff and visitors.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe in a range of situations. They feel safe and staff and parents believe that pupils are safe in school. Keeping children safe is a core part of the school's work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment have not been consistently good since the academy was formed. Consequently, they have not led to good outcomes over time.
- Where teaching is less effective, learning time is not used well. Expectations are not

high enough and pupils are not challenged to make good or better progress. In these circumstances, pupils are not moved on quickly enough to deepen their understanding, and staff do not give pupils regular opportunities to explore ideas in depth.

- Staff have access to a range of information about individual pupils, but this is not being used consistently well to plan activities to allow pupils to make rapid progress from their different starting points. Leaders are aware that staff need further training in order to help them to achieve this.
 - Progress is also slowed when pupils are unclear about what they are learning. At times, they complete a number of tasks which obscure their understanding of the purpose of their studies.
 - Some teaching assistants lead sessions and support learning most effectively, but others are not well deployed by teachers. At times, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported to make good progress, but this is not yet consistent.
 - Interesting displays around the school celebrate pupils' successes and aid their learning. Pupils are enthusiastic about their studies and want to do well. Staff and pupils enjoy positive relationships, but these are not always used to challenge the pupils to make rapid progress.
 - Where teaching is most effective, activities are thoughtfully planned and resources are used well to help pupils of different abilities make good progress. Questions are used effectively to probe understanding, assess learning and refocus pupils as required. Verbal feedback from staff is consistently of a good quality.
 - Teachers follow the school's marking policy and pupils respond positively to comments from staff. Feedback that is given as pupils are completing tasks is having a marked impact on the progress made by pupils currently in the school.
 - Leaders have a strong commitment to developing reading, writing, communication and mathematics across the curriculum. Evidence of this having an impact was seen during the inspection. Examples of high-quality writing in different subjects were particularly strong. However, leaders are aware that there is more to do to build on these improvements.
 - Homework is set in line with the school's policy. Pupils are given tasks to consolidate their learning in English and mathematics and they are also set extended activities through learning projects which expand their skills and understanding. A large majority of parents, who made their views known during the inspection, believe that their child receives appropriate homework for their age.
 - Regular assessment takes place in all subjects. The accuracy of this is checked both internally and externally and leaders are beginning to use this to plan further action to improve outcomes for pupils. However, staff are not using this information about what pupils know and can do in a consistently effective way to plan activities that stretch and challenge pupils of different abilities to make rapid progress.
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- Parents are given accurate information about how their child is progressing, how well they are doing against the expected standards and what they need to do to improve.

As regular reports that are given to parents are clear, a large majority of parents believe that they receive valuable information about the progress their child is making.

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, safe and well looked after. This is an inclusive school where everyone is valued.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and want to do well. They appreciate the school's rewards system. They are proud of their achievements and celebrate other pupils' successes.
- Pupils' self-confidence and self-awareness are developed through opportunities to take on responsibilities. For example, pupils show visitors around the school, they serve on the school council and they organise sporting events both inside and outside school.
- Pupils respect the ideas of others, work well together and explore different cultures and faiths. They have a clear understanding of British values, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is deeply embedded in the work of the school.
- Pupils are keen to learn and take pride in their work. However, staff do not consistently use pupils' positive attitudes to allow pupils to explore topics in greater depth. This slows down the progress that pupils make.
- Staff promote pupils' physical and emotional well-being effectively. Pupils take regular exercise and they are encouraged to eat healthily. Those who have medical needs are well cared for and children who may have social or emotional difficulties are supported effectively. Pupils are confident that staff would respond quickly to help them resolve any concerns that they might raise.
- Personal development and welfare are actively promoted at the before- and after-school care provided at Kingfishers. Pupils enjoy taking part in the activities that staff provide. They behave well and clear routines to keep pupils safe are in place.
- Pupils understand what bullying means and say that it is extremely rare in the school. Pupils feel safe and are taught to stay safe through a range of activities. They understand the potential dangers of the internet and they are taught about road safety and healthy relationships.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and respectful, and enjoy positive relationships with adults and other children. They do not need to be closely supervised as they regulate their own behaviour.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and low-level disruption to learning is very rare. Pupils usually listen very carefully to staff and their classmates.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in class and around the school. The dining hall is calm and orderly and meals are treated as a social occasion. Pupils are considerate towards

each other during social times.

- Behaviour has improved considerably since the academy opened. There have been marked improvements in the behaviour of individuals and the use of sanctions and fixed-term exclusions has declined considerably. There have been no permanent exclusions since the academy opened.
- Attendance is consistently above national averages and most pupils are rarely absent. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved over time. Absence is followed up systematically and good attendance is rewarded. Pupils want to attend regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes have improved since the academy was formed but they are still not good. Pupils do not make consistently strong progress across a range of subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils have made slower progress and attained less well than other pupils. Although differences in outcomes are beginning to diminish slightly, pupil premium funding has not yet had enough impact on helping previously low- and middle-attaining disadvantaged pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils, particularly middle-ability pupils, have made slow progress in mathematics over time. Current pupils are beginning to make improved progress, but this is not yet rapid enough to address gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- The end-of-key-stage tests in 2017 indicated that pupils who had reached the end of Year 6 had made slower progress over time in reading than pupils who had reached the end of Year 6 in 2016. Their progress was also slower than that made by pupils nationally. However, pupils in other year groups in the school made better progress and the improved practice that is now in place is helping current pupils make improved progress in reading.
- Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. The most able readers are fluent and read with expression. Pupils of different abilities can use the sounds that letters represent to decode unfamiliar words.
- Pupils made slow progress in writing at the end of Year 6 in 2016. However, as the result of targeted action, progress improved in 2017. Current pupils are producing good-quality written work in a range of subjects.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved since the academy was formed. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress from their starting points to other pupils in the school.
- The progress made by the most able pupils has improved over time. In 2017, at the end of Year 6, a greater proportion of pupils reached a high standard in reading, writing and mathematics than nationally. There were marked improvements in writing and mathematics and the most able disadvantaged pupils achieved well in 2017.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 2 is consistently similar to that found nationally. This, along with a close working relationship with Plantsbrook School, help pupils to be

effectively prepared for secondary education.

School details

Unique reference number	141206
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10037091

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Griffiths
Headteacher	Adrienne Smith
Telephone number	0121 464 8738
Website	www.townj.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@townj.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Town Junior School converted to become an academy on 1 November 2014. The academy is sponsored by Plantsbrook School, which is part of the Plantsbrook Learning Trust.
- When its predecessor school was inspected by Ofsted in February 2014, it was judged to require improvement.
- There have been a number of changes in staffing since the academy formed: 10 teachers have left and nine teachers have joined the school. Seven members of staff joined the school as newly qualified teachers.
- The school is the same size as an average-sized primary school. There are two classes in each year group.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to the national average. The proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is below average.

- An average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school provides before- and after-school care through a provision known as Kingfishers.
- Formal support has been provided by a national leader of education since March 2017. This has been brokered through the academy trust.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other leaders and staff. They also spoke to the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body, the headteacher of Plantsbrook School and the national leader of education who supports the school.
- Inspectors made short visits to every class on both days of the inspection. The majority of these visits were made with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. Inspectors also looked at pupils' books from this school year and from last year.
- Pupils were spoken to formally and informally and an inspector heard pupils read and visited the before-school care provided by Kingfishers. Inspectors also observed behaviour during social time.
- Inspectors considered 61 responses and 28 free-text comments on Parent View. An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the second day and one parent was spoken to by telephone.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, information about managing teachers' performance and staff training records. Minutes of meetings of the governing body and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed. Documents relating to safeguarding were checked and inspectors looked at published information on the school's website.

Inspection team

Simon Mosley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kevin Butlin

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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