

# Plantsbrook School

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

## Inspection dates

4–5 June 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders have taken swift and decisive action since the previous inspection to address areas for improvement. Their focus and determination has seen the school move forward.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. They provide good quality professional development and monitor its impact effectively.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons effectively to meet the needs of pupils. They know their pupils extremely well. However, not all teachers consistently challenge pupils or use effective questioning to promote further learning and even stronger progress.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 4 have risen sharply. The overall progress of pupils in 2018 was significantly above national averages.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved markedly.
- Safeguarding of pupils is highly effective. There is a strong culture of care and support throughout the school.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils is outstanding. Leaders have a comprehensive programme that looks to develop pupils as well-rounded citizens.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is calm and orderly, and pupils show positive attitudes towards their studies. Occasional incidents of minor disruption are being tackled well by leaders
- The sixth form is outstanding. Leaders are exceptionally strong and provide high levels of pastoral support. The progress made by students in A level and applied general qualifications is significantly above national averages.
- The curriculum at key stage 3 provides a broad and balanced range of subjects. However, the impact of the decision to shorten key stage 3 to two years has not yet been fully evaluated.
- Accurate assessment at key stages 4 and 5 provides teachers and leaders with the information they need to ensure that pupils and students make strong progress. However, at key stage 3, assessment procedures to check pupils' retention of knowledge and understanding are less effective. As a result, the progress made by key stage 3 pupils is not as strong as it could be.

## Full report

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

- Further improve the quality of leadership and management by fully reviewing recent changes to the key stage 3 curriculum to ensure that pupils develop excellent knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to promote even better progress and attainment. Do this by:
  - ensuring that teachers consistently check pupils' retention of knowledge at key stage 3
  - more consistently challenging pupils and promoting further learning through effective questioning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher, supported by senior leaders and governors, has shown a clear and determined vision to drive the school forward. Areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report have been successfully addressed and the school has also built on existing strengths.
- Leaders have had a clear focus on improving outcomes at key stage 4. They have worked closely with middle leaders so that the progress of pupils can be effectively tracked and monitored. In a number of subjects, progress in 2018 was significantly above national averages.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The introduction of new monitoring and evaluation procedures has led to more timely support being offered to staff, as well as better quality professional development. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning has improved.
- The leadership of the sixth form is exceptionally strong. Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the school's study programmes and provide high levels of pastoral care. The progress that students make in academic and vocational qualifications is significantly above national averages.
- Following the previous inspection, there has been an external review of pupil premium funding. Leaders have successfully implemented a number of initiatives, including 'class profiles', which has identified key pupils within each group. This has enabled teachers to provide more targeted support. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in key stage 4, has improved significantly.
- The leadership of those pupils with SEND is highly effective. Teaching assistants are deployed well and pupil progress is closely monitored so that appropriate support can be put in place.
- The provision for those pupils with visual impairment is exceptionally strong. Pupils are given high levels of support through a specialist unit within the school and are fully integrated into school life.
- Subject leaders play a full and active role in the leadership of the school. Regular meetings with senior leaders take place in order to discuss the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders provide exceptionally high quality spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for pupils. A comprehensive programme is in place for both timetabled lessons and form time, which is supported by year group assemblies. Pupils talk confidently about fundamental British values and how the school council provides them with an opportunity to express their views.
- Newly qualified teachers and trainees receive high levels of support from staff and the quality of professional development offered to them is strong.
- The school offers a broad range of extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils report that they enjoy the number of opportunities that the school offers and that these support them with their learning. Leaders recognise that further work is required in order to

track the participation rates of different pupil groups.

- The school curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to learn. Leaders recently altered the curriculum so that pupils begin their GCSE subjects in Year 9. However, some pupils finish foundation subjects in Year 8 without the secure knowledge, understanding and skills outlined in the national curriculum. Leaders recognise that further work is required to ensure that pupils' retention of knowledge in key stage 3 is as strong as that seen in key stages 4 and 5.

## **Governance of the school**

- The governance of the school is increasingly strong and effective.
- As recommended in the previous inspection, a review of governance took place in March 2017. As a result, a number of changes have been made to the governing body and further clarification has been established between the roles of the local governing body and the school trust.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although some are relatively new to post, the governors are passionate about the school and are keen to see it improve further.
- Governors have positive relations with senior leaders. They provide support and actively challenge leaders by asking questions about the information they receive. For example, they are asking questions about leaders' decision to change the curriculum at key stage 3.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a strong culture of keeping children safe and provides a high level of pastoral support. School records regarding pupils who are removed from roll are detailed and appropriately organised.
- Regular checks are made on the recruitment of staff and this is monitored carefully by governors and senior leaders. All governors receive safeguarding training and visitors to the school are suitably vetted.
- Leaders work closely with external agencies to keep pupils safe. Where necessary, swift referrals are made and pastoral staff closely monitor pupils who are at high risk.
- All staff receive annual training on safeguarding and there are fortnightly briefings, which take place to keep staff informed of any ongoing issues. Staff are clear as to what to do if they have concerns over the welfare of a pupil.
- Leaders show a high level of concern for pupil safety. For example, they actively insist that pupils wear their bicycle helmets when leaving the school site on their cycles.
- Pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of safeguarding issues including radicalisation and criminal drug exploitation associated with county lines. Pupils are clear as to where they should go if they have any concerns.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is strong.
- Teachers use information about pupils very effectively. The introduction of 'class profiles' has meant that teachers plan lessons that suitably meet the needs of pupils. This enables them to learn well.
- The quality of work in pupils' exercise books is of a good order. Pupils show pride in the way they present their work and teachers have high expectations of what work they produce.
- Pupils show a high level of engagement in lessons and have positive relationships with their teachers. They actively participate in their learning and are keen to share their ideas with their peers.
- Teachers demonstrate a strong level of subject knowledge. In English, for example, pupils are provided with contextual knowledge about the Russian revolution to enable them to work successfully in groups to make connections to the novel 'Animal Farm'.
- Teachers use questioning within lessons to effectively check understanding and address misunderstandings. In French, for example, teachers use the target language to question pupils in order to develop their knowledge. Sometimes, however, questioning is less effective in other subjects at challenging pupils to extend their thinking and promote further learning.
- Pupils demonstrate a commitment to improving their work and responding to the feedback from teachers. Inspectors observed pupils routinely making corrections and addressing gaps in knowledge and understanding. As a result, exercise books demonstrated the progress pupils were making over time.
- Teachers use assessment in key stages 4 and 5 extremely well. The information, which is shared by teachers following an assessment, allows pupils to have an accurate understanding of what they can do well and how to improve. However, assessment procedures in key stage 3 are not consistently checking whether pupils retain knowledge, understanding and skills.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils leave as 'resilient and well-rounded young people' and this is evident in the way that pupils conduct themselves both in and out of the classroom.
- The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is thorough and fully prepares pupils for life beyond school. The 'Think!' lessons, which pupils have once a week, provide a comprehensive study of a wide range of issues and encourage pupils to develop various different skills. In a Year 7 tutor session, for example, pupils were learning about healthy eating and active lifestyles. They could confidently discuss

the topic with their teacher and make connections to prior learning on mental health.

- Pupils benefit greatly from having different opportunities to develop leadership skills. The student council plays an active role in school life and all pupils contribute to the election of their representatives. Leaders also promote further leadership opportunities through 'well-being' leaders and student librarians.
- Pupils value the school's system of rewards. They regularly receive praise for their academic and pastoral achievements and speak highly of the use of green and gold cards. Pupils are motivated to attend school and do well.
- Tutor time is used extremely effectively to help support personal development. Pupils are taught explicitly about fundamental British values and are able to relate these to life in and out of school. Pupils are highly knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe and healthy.
- Pupils report that bullying is extremely rare and if it does occur it is dealt with swiftly. The vast majority of responses to Ofsted's pupil survey indicate that pupils feel safe at school and enjoy their learning.
- Leaders have implemented a strong programme of careers education, advice and guidance. They have mapped the careers programme against nationally recognised criteria and staff have delivered sessions to pupils through PSHE and form time. Pupils have access to impartial careers advice and the programme is regularly reviewed and updated. The school also participates in national careers week.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well presented and conduct themselves in an orderly and calm manner. They speak positively about the pastoral support they receive from staff and are proud to be members of the school community.
- Overall levels of attendance are above the national average. Leaders have high expectations for pupil attendance and have clear strategies in place to improve attendance even further. Punctuality to school and lessons is extremely high.
- Levels of exclusions are low and are currently below the national average.
- Pupils show a high level of engagement in lessons. Disruption to learning is minimal and pupils are quick to respond to staff instructions. Some pupils did suggest that there was some minor disruption to learning in Year 10. Leaders are aware of this and have already taken steps to tackle this issue.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Overall outcomes have risen sharply in the last three years. Progress was significantly below the national average in 2016, but improved markedly in 2017. By the end of key stage 4 in 2018, progress was significantly above the national average.
- In 2018, the progress and attainment of pupils in English and mathematics were above the national average. The proportion of pupils in Year 11 obtaining a strong pass in

both subjects was also above the national average.

- The overall progress pupils make at the end of key stage 4 in the English Baccalaureate combination of subjects has been significantly above average for two years. It has been particularly strong in humanities, which reflects the high quality of teaching and learning seen in this subject area.
- The progress of current pupils in key stage 4, as indicated in the school's own assessment information and noted by inspectors in pupils' work in their books and during lessons, appears equally as strong. Over time, it is clear that pupils are securing knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of subjects.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have successfully taken steps to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged and pupils with SEND. In 2018, the progress of both groups of pupils was significantly above the national average. The school's own information on the progress that current groups of these pupils are making indicates that they are performing at or above the national average.
- Pupils are well prepared for their future in education or training. The support and guidance offered to pupils help them to make well-informed decisions about their next steps.
- The outcomes for pupils in key stage 3 in a wide range of subjects are strong. However, pupils' development of knowledge, understanding and skills in some foundation subjects is weaker. Some pupils struggle to recall prior learning and make connections with content they have previously been taught.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Outstanding

- The leadership and management of the sixth form is outstanding. Students have access to a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications and are given excellent support in choosing their courses. Leaders have very high expectations and a comprehensive understanding of students both collectively and individually.
- Leaders' monitoring and evaluation procedures are highly effective. They have an excellent understanding of how each subject performs over time and are swift to spot areas that need to improve.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is extremely strong. Students make above average progress in a vast number of subjects. The small numbers of students without a standard pass in GCSE English or mathematics also make considerable progress by the end of their courses.
- Outcomes in the sixth form are extremely high. The progress students made in 2018 in both A Level and applied general qualifications was significantly above national averages. Current outcomes are equally as strong.
- Through strong and effective systems, leaders provide exceptional support to students. Where academic underperformance is identified, appropriate interventions are put into place to ensure that students do not underachieve. Leaders work tirelessly to ensure that students are able to complete their programmes of study to enable them to access

higher education or training.

- The pastoral care provided to students is very strong. Attendance is extremely high and retention rates are well above average. Students are overwhelmingly positive about the sixth form and how the school supports their personal development. They are clear about how to keep themselves safe and are aware of the importance of British values.
- The sixth form provides high-quality careers information, advice and guidance. Students have access to a number of university visits and talk confidently about their next steps. A significant number of students go on to university or higher education.
- The school's provision meets all the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme. Students have access to high-quality enrichment opportunities and work experience, which leaders monitor carefully. Students are very well prepared for future employment and their role in modern Britain.
- Students in the sixth form are smart, confident and mature learners. Their conduct around the school makes them strong role models to other pupils.



## School details

Unique reference number	137053
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10058479

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

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	1316
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	203
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Claire Pritchard
Headteacher	Tracy Campbell
Telephone number	0121 362 7310
Website	<a href="http://web.plantsbrookschool.co.uk/">http://web.plantsbrookschool.co.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:t.campbell@plantsbrookschool.co.uk">t.campbell@plantsbrookschool.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	8–9 November 2016

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Plantsbrook Learning Trust, which includes Plantsbrook School and a junior school. The board of trustees oversees the local governing body, which in turn is responsible for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and progress of pupils and their welfare.
- Plantsbrook School is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is high because of the school's specialist provision for

16 pupils who are visually impaired.

- The current headteacher was in post at the time of the last inspection. The chair of the local governing body was appointed in September 2018.
- There are no pupils in alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 45 lessons or parts of lessons, eight form time sessions and two assemblies. Many of these were jointly observed with either the headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team.
- 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 local governing body and three other governors.
- Inspectors took account of the 491 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, and the 200 free text responses received from parents during the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the 76 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey and the 63 responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and scrutinised a number of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, pupil premium and governance review, improvement plans and school information on pupils’ and students’ recent attainment and progress.
- Inspectors also considered behaviour and attendance information, and policies and procedures relating to the needs of pupils with SEND, safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors also visited the school’s visual impairment unit and conducted a learning walk to observe pupils who are visually impaired in lessons.

## Inspection team

Mark Howes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Derek Barnes	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Badyal	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Eddie Wilkes	Ofsted Inspector

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