

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Plantsbrook School

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

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 February 2025

Outcome

Plantsbrook School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Kerensa Neal. This school is part of Broadleaf Partnership 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), Claire Pritchard, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Neil Turner.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong sense of belonging and togetherness at Plantsbrook School. The school is ambitious for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are relentless in their drive to ensure pupils are ready for the next stage of their education.

The school's charter of 'be the best we can be' is understood and lived out by all, including students in the sixth form. Pupils are safe and enjoy learning. This contributes to their high attendance. Positive and mutually respectful relationships are commonplace. This is further reflected in pupils' exemplary conduct. Classrooms are calm and maintain a productive atmosphere. Pupils know that there is always an adult to speak to if anything worries them.

Pupils and families praise the wide-ranging opportunities on offer to extend learning beyond the classroom, which many pupils keenly attend. This includes musical events, sports clubs and residential visits. Pupils are passionate about taking on leadership roles, such as student leaders, ambassadors and mentors to younger peers.

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

The curriculum is well designed and ensures that pupils learn the knowledge they need in clearly defined steps. This enables them to secure their understanding before learning

more complex ideas later. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain ideas clearly and check that pupils have understood what they are learning. Staff generally use the information they gain from assessments to adapt future learning based on pupils' needs. However, this is not always consistent. At times, staff do not identify and address pupils' misconceptions effectively enough. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge, including disadvantaged pupils.

The school has effective systems for identifying pupils who require additional support, including pupils with SEND. Staff work successfully with a wide range of external agencies to understand what additional help pupils require. Pupils, including those who attend the specially resourced provision, take part in all aspects of school life. Staff know their pupils well and ensure that all can access the curriculum. The school quickly identifies pupils who need further help to read fluently. Pupils receive swift and effective support that helps them to read confidently.

The school manages attendance effectively. Well-developed systems enable leaders to check pupils' attendance and identify patterns and barriers that prevent pupils from attending school regularly. Staff work well with external colleagues to support pupils to overcome these barriers. They have a holistic approach to improving attendance. Behaviour is exemplary. The school has embedded a rewards and sanctions policy that is understood by all and consistently applied. Pupils who struggle to regulate their behaviour are well supported to improve.

Pupils speak confidently about topics that they have learned in the school's personal, social and health education lessons. They explore themes such as health and well-being and living in the wider world. They are knowledgeable about fundamental British values and other faiths and cultures. The school offers a variety of wide-ranging experiences for pupils to develop their talents and interests, such as orchestra performances, drama productions and many sporting events. Vulnerable pupils are supported extremely well to get involved in these aspects of the school. The school's high-quality careers advice and guidance programme supports pupils in making informed and ambitious choices about their next steps in education, employment or training.

Sixth-form students enjoy a supportive and enriching experience. They demonstrate high levels of self-motivation and take full advantage of the wide-ranging enrichment activities on offer.

Leaders at all levels, including governors, understand the priorities of the school. The trust provides supportive challenge to ensure the school takes effective action in the very best interests of pupils. They are committed to enabling pupils to thrive. Most staff are proud to work at the school. They value the school's work to consider their workload and well-being when making decisions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that assessment is used consistently and precisely to check on what pupils know and can do. Consequently, the school does not routinely adapt teaching to fill any gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and expertise to make purposeful checks on pupils' knowledge to enable them to effectively address gaps in pupils' learning.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2019.

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	137053
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10343957
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1570
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	310
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Neil Turner
CEO of the trust	Claire Pritchard
Headteacher	Kerensa Neal
Website	web.plantsbrookschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Broadleaf Partnership Trust.
- The current headteacher has been in post since September 2023.
- The school uses six registered providers of alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for a small number of pupils with visual impairments.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with trustees and met senior trust officers, the chair of the local governing committee and members of the school's senior leadership team. The lead inspector also spoke with colleagues at the providers of alternative provision.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors took account of the parents' free-text comments and the responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey. Inspectors also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys. Inspectors met with a small group of school staff.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's website, other school documents and read a range of publicly available information about the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and interactions during lessons and at break and lunchtimes and spoke to many pupils during the inspection. Inspectors visited the school's hub and other pastoral support rooms.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.

Inspection team

Ed Leighton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Hamilton	Ofsted Inspector

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