

Town Junior School

Ebrook Road, Sutton Coldfield, B72 1NX

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is not consistently good across all year groups.
- The procedures for checking the quality of teaching are not presently improving all teaching.
- Teaching requires improvement. Teachers do not always expect the best from their pupils.
- Teachers often do not use pupils' targets well enough to help them to improve their work, make better progress and achieve well.
- A lack of a settled and cohesive senior leadership team has restricted school improvement since the last inspection.
- There has been insufficient time for the school to make all the changes needed to be good.
- Behaviour requires improvement to prevent disruption in some lessons and to help pupils' concentrate on their work.
- A lack of communication with parents is reducing their confidence in the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils feel safe in school. They enjoy coming to school, shown by above average attendance figures.
- Recent training is improving teaching. Teaching in Year 6 is outstanding.
- The new headteacher, with the help of strategic partners, has made good progress in prioritising school improvement actions.
- Leaders now have a much-improved capacity to bring-about the necessary changes to make the school good.
- Test results for Year 6 in 2013 confirm above average attainment levels in English and mathematics. These pupils matched or exceeded progress levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The governing body has received appropriate training and is now holding the school to account for the necessary improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons, four of which were jointly observed with the headteacher. A number of small group activities were also observed.
- Inspectors talked to pupils, looked at work in their books and listened to them read.
- The team had meetings with senior leaders, year and subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also had meetings with four members of the governing body, a local authority representative and a national leader for education who supports the school.
- Inspectors took account of 26 responses on the online questionnaire, Parent View and two letters from parents. The team analysed 14 questionnaires completed by school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a range of documentation, including its development plans, information on pupils' progress and attainment and evaluation of its own performance. They looked at pupils' books and reports produced by the local authority.
- The team also looked at information on staff performance and records relating to attendance and behaviour, safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

Alan Giles, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anna Smith

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Town Junior School is slightly smaller than the average school of its type.
- Pupils are taught in two classes in each year group, from Year 3 to 6.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is around the average, and those whose first language is believed not to be English, well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is below average. This funding is to support pupils in local authority care, known to be eligible for free school meals or from service families.
- Since the last inspection in January 2013, there has been significant senior-staff turbulence.
- The present headteacher is new to the school and took-up her post in September 2013.
- The school has two deputy headteachers who have been seconded from local schools.
- The school is being supported by the headteacher of Plantsbrook Secondary School, who is a national leader of education. This support extends to her full senior leadership team.
- An agreement is in place for Plantsbrook to sponsor the school within an Academies Trust, under one governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better by:
 - using outstanding practices in the school to improve how other teachers check on pupils' understanding and adjust tasks in lessons, so that pupils achieve the best they can
 - ensuring teachers have high enough expectations of pupils and set ambitious targets
- Improve achievement by:
 - ensuring pupils of all abilities make the progress they are capable of in Years 3 to 5
 - improving the provision for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs and those who are eligible for pupil premium, throughout the school
 - improving the behaviour and commitment to learning of a minority of pupils, especially those in Year 5
- Increase the impact and capacity of the leadership team and governors by:
 - improving checks on the quality of teaching, with a sharper focus and more accurate judgement on the achievement of different groups of pupils in lessons
 - building up confidence in the school among parents by improving communication with them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

Pupils' achievement requires improvement because too many pupils do not make the progress they are capable of between Year 3 and Year 5.

- The school recognises it is not successful in boosting the confidence and skill levels of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. A relatively high proportion of these are not making expected progress and are not catching up with other pupils quickly enough.
- Pupil premium funding is being used to identify the learning needs of eligible pupils. However, the additional use of support staff and learning mentors is not currently making the impact that was noted in 2013. Then, the gap between this group and their classmates narrowed significantly from nearly two years behind in English and mathematics in 2012, to only a term and a half behind in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The provision for a very small number of pupils who have severe behavioural needs, or who are considerably behind their peers in English and mathematics, is not yet successfully motivating them enough to work harder.
- In Year 3, the less-able pupils are quickly identified and better supported than previously. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is improving attainment in reading and writing. Some of these pupils do not make similar good progress in some mathematics' lessons.
- The higher achieving pupils perform best in Year 3 and Year 6. They make good progress because teachers recognise their capabilities and they are extremely motivated to meet the targets set for them. In Years 4 and 5 the progress for these pupils is less good because their targets are not consistently ambitious enough.
- The Year 6 test results in 2013 show that almost all pupils made good progress from their starting points in the school. Some pupils who were eligible for free school meals or had special educational needs made outstanding progress.
- Present Year 6 pupils are continuing this positive trend and almost all are on course to achieve expected or more than expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. They did not have such high expectations when they entered Year 6.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching presently varies too much in quality and therefore requires improvement. Although the majority of teaching observed was good or outstanding, it is not consistently good throughout the school.
- Much teaching varies from good to requiring improvement, sometimes in the same lesson. This is often because teachers drift from the intended purpose of the lesson and do not notice that some pupils lose focus or need further challenges.
- A lack of consistency of practices to accurately identify the needs of pupils who have special educational needs, means teachers often do not plan tasks that provide the next steps in learning. As a result teaching assistants are not always well-directed to support pupils' learning.

- Although the quality of teaching is now monitored more regularly, the school does not share, often enough, the good and outstanding teaching practices that are evident, to help others improve.
- Some teaching, especially in Year 5, does not successfully motivate pupils to learn and keep them on task. History and mathematics teaching observed in these classes contained little learning because of poor attitudes, constant interruptions and unsuccessful modification of inappropriate behaviour.
- Pupils are not informed well enough of the steps for success in lessons, further increasing off-task behaviour. However, in Year 6, instructions or marking in books gives extra tasks or corrections to improve, or additional challenges that boost pupils' interest and progress.
- Not all new pupils in Year 3 make the good progress in mathematics as they do in English. This is because teachers over-rely on plans and resources and do not always take into consideration what pupils already know and what the next targets should be.
- When teaching is good or better the more-able pupils are challenged very well. These pupils often perform at levels well above those expected for their age. For example, a Year 3 pupil wrote about being met by a 'forest of eyes' in his creative story and a group of Year 6 pupils calculated the angles between perpendicular lines.
- The quality of teaching in Year 6 is outstanding and successfully gets many pupils back on track to where they should be. Pupils of all abilities work very hard in both these classrooms and strive to achieve the ambitious targets set for them.
- The school insufficiently prioritises the use of homework as an important extension to learning by giving parents more opportunities to support the learning of their children. Parents say homework arrangements need to be improved.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. A number of staff and parents confirm the less-than-good behaviour. There has been a small increase in the number of fixed exclusions recently to deal with more serious incidents.
- Much of the poorer behaviour is confined to Year 5, where pupils are not responding positively to their teachers. Infrequent incidents of less-than-good behaviour in some other classes are due to pupils drifting off task or not listening effectively enough to their teachers.
- Pupils say the new behaviour policies are working well. The Year 6 'peer mediators' do a good job in the playground, where behaviour is good. There was no anti-social behaviour seen during the inspection and recorded incidents of disruptive behaviour have decreased recently.
- Attendance rates are above average and pupils arrive at school and lessons on time. In most lessons behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. They are outstanding in Year 6.
- In all good or better lessons pupils of all ages work very well together and often 'buddy-up' to collaborate on tasks. They discuss learning and give opinions on each other's work.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a sound understanding of the different forms that bullying can take. They say bullying is rare and always dealt with effectively. They also understand the issues surrounding cyber-bullying.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because progress since the last inspection and a subsequent monitoring visit, has been too slow, affected negatively by a period of turbulence within the leadership teams. Issues identified in the previous inspection, to help all pupils to reach their true potential, have yet to be achieved.
- The new headteacher, in her partnership with the Plantsbrook senior leadership team and the local authority, has more swiftly developed accurate improvement plans. These have rigorously focussed on accountability at every level and on the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- All subject and year leaders are new and have had training to understand pupil progress information more clearly. They are at an early stage of development but are enthusiastically taking on responsibility to work with teachers to identify the pupils who need the additional support to improve achievement to a level of which they are capable.
- Staff know what needs to be done to improve and believe the school is well led and that leaders are doing all they can to improve teaching. The quality of teaching is improving. In joint observations the headteacher's judgements of teaching matched inspectors'. Training is helping staff to meet pupils' progress targets and teachers' effectiveness in the classroom is linked to pay and promotion.
- An external review identified that provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs was not good. There has been improvement in the accuracy of these pupils' assessments and an appreciation of the need to communicate these findings more effectively to parents.
- Leadership at every level understands that all actions put in place now need to be evaluated on a day-to-day basis to increase the speed at which interventions are put in place to improve pupils' achievements. There is an appropriate time-scale in place to become a good school.
- The school is prioritising the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The teaching of phonics and guided reading is improving the reading and writing skills of the younger pupils. A focus on investigations and problem-solving is more slowly having a similar impact in mathematics. Additional subjects and activities, including educational visits and clubs, enrich the main diet of literacy and numeracy. Work to develop the school's pupil council and pupils' voice, for example in religious education, has made a positive impact on their personal development.
- Sports funding is used to link the school with an external sports partnership. As a result pupils have been trained to be sports leaders and counsellors and many attend external club activities. Funding is also used to assess core skills in the school's physical education curriculum.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Changes to personnel, including a new chair, a recent external review and an audit of the governing body and an appropriate development plan has helped governance improve since the previous inspection. Their work has been significantly helped by the detailed information it now receives from the school, including performance data about pupils' progress linked to national expectations.

- Relevant training has taken place and this is beginning to allow governors to make better use of their own expertise to review the performance of teachers.
- Governors oversee the arrangements for the spending of the pupil premium and are aware of the recent improvement, and actions still needed. They understand how to measure the impact of the sport funding plans to develop external partnerships to improve provision for physical education across the school.
- The governors have been actively involved in the plans to establish the sponsored academy partnership with Plantsbrook School. They have a vision for improvement, by using common approaches across both schools, under a unified governing body.
- Inspectors agree with the small number of parents who feel the governors have not communicated this vision effectively enough.
- The governing body makes sure that all safeguarding requirements are met.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 103347 |
| Local authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 434128 |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 230 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Rob Salter |
| Headteacher | Adrienne Smith |
| Date of previous school inspection | 15 January 2013 |
| Telephone number | 0121 4648738 |
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