

Plumstead Manor School

Old Mill Road, London SE18 1QF

Inspection dates

3–4 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders do not ensure that processes are consistently applied across the school. Consequently staff do not always uphold the high expectations of leaders with regards to pupils' progress and behaviour.
- Governors' challenge to school leaders requires further focus on outcomes for pupils to ensure rapid improvement in pupils' progress.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment does not ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly the most-able, disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs or disability.
- Pupils' behaviour does not always meet the expectations of the school. Where staff have high expectations in lessons, behaviour is better and pupils take care over their work. Where teaching does not challenge pupils and stretch their learning, low-level disruption can occur.
- Pupils are often unclear about how to improve their work based on the feedback that they receive.
- School procedures for checking attendance and punctuality have not secured sustained improvements. The number of fixed-term exclusions are too high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Assessment information is not used effectively across all subjects to enable pupils to make more rapid progress from their starting points.
- Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form are not consistently good. This hinders the overall progress made by those who undertake both vocational and academic courses.
- The gap in progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is not closing rapidly across all subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Newly appointed leaders, including the headteacher, are accurate in their evaluation of the school. They are sharply focused on the correct areas to bring about further improvement.
- When assessment information is used well to support teachers' planning, pupils make good progress and enjoy their learning, for example in physical education and history.
- The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good and pupils

feel safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils' outcomes are consistently good or better by ensuring that teachers:
 - use assessment information to plan activities that build on what pupils have already learned
 - provide effective feedback that moves pupils' learning on rapidly
 - develop effective strategies to support the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that policies and procedures, including for attendance, are applied with consistently high expectations by all staff
 - reducing instances of low-level disruption in lessons through effective planning and appropriate challenge for pupils' learning.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The leaders of the school have implemented strategies to ensure that the school's plans for improvement reflect their uncompromising and accurate self-evaluation. While this has led to planning for school improvement, the full impact of these plans is yet to be seen across all areas of the school. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is not yet good across all subjects. The behaviour and progress of pupils do not meet senior leaders' high expectations consistently.
- Leaders recognise the challenges they face in recruitment and retention of some staff but have not used this as an excuse. Senior leaders have set a high bar for improving teaching in key subjects, particularly science and mathematics. Local networks, including participation in the local 'Physics hub' and work with local schools, are being used to support school improvement on a subject department level. These recent developments are yet to demonstrate the impact anticipated by the school's leadership in raising standards and improving teaching consistently.
- Senior and middle leaders who are new to their roles are developing their skills in monitoring assessment outcomes and enhancing teachers' use of information to support their planning. There has not been enough time to see the impact of this and weaker aspects remain in the quality of teaching. There is inconsistency in the use of assessment and support provided to pupils. The expectations of presentation of work in pupils' books vary between subjects and year groups.
- Senior leaders have a secure understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school, which is supported by an accurate system of review by the local authority and work with nearby schools. Consequently, support and monitoring of teachers' improvement are more effective now.
- The curriculum is broad and offers a wide range of options to pupils at Key Stages 4 and 5. The decision recently to remove non-qualifying subjects from the curriculum strengthens the science being taught at GCSE. The least-able pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability can access more challenging qualifications in mathematics by using lower-level courses as stepping stones. Work-related courses are popular with sixth formers who also combine these with academic subjects.
- Leaders have developed an ambitious plan for improvement that has included the introduction of new procedures and accountability processes this year. However, leaders have not ensured that staff are consistent in the way they carry out their roles, for example when responding to instances of disruptive behaviour in lessons and around the school. The welfare of pupils requires improvement because systems for close monitoring of behaviour and punctuality are not followed consistently.
- School leaders recognise the significance of a strong start to secondary education which begins with pupils' transition from primary school. Strong links are being developed with local primary schools and the Flying Starts programme is designed to support pupils' entry into Key Stage 3 through close monitoring of progress across subjects. While the impact of the programme has been seen in some subjects, such as physical education, it is not as successful in all subject areas.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well planned but not embedded across the school. Pupils are offered a wide range of enrichment activities which support the curriculum, including residential trips abroad. Such opportunities are not shared widely enough for the broadest range of pupils to access.
- Leaders and governors have secured the financial sustainability of the school with close support from the local authority. The financial programme has been described as 'enabling' by governors who have since used it to focus the school's improvement planning.
- The impact of additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils is not clearly evaluated. The progress being made by disadvantaged pupils is too variable across subjects.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors support the school leadership by visiting the school and scrutinising systems. Senior and middle leaders now report to the governing body directly. Governors' visits are infrequent. Their challenge to the leadership requires refined focus on pupils' progress in order to drive more rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and in outcomes for pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able.

- Governors are candid in their evaluation of the school’s performance and areas for development, identifying the progress of some groups of pupils to be too weak. Governors do not have an informed view of the progress and expectations for the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The procedures for checking staff who are newly employed by the school are thorough and are checked by the nominated governor. The school’s processes to identify and follow up any concerns are secure. Working relationships with other agencies and the local authority to support pupils’ welfare are well established. Consequently, pupils are safe and parents feel that their children are well cared for in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not securing strong outcomes for all pupils, particularly in science and mathematics.
- Assessment is not used consistently, particularly in Key Stage 3. Pupils’ progress is hindered by some teachers who do not plan their lessons by taking account of their prior learning and progress. Where assessment of work provides pupils with accurate feedback, they are able to correct misconceptions quickly and dispel misunderstanding. Teachers’ feedback is not consistently clear enough to provide guidance to pupils on how they can improve.
- In subjects where assessment is sharper, teachers know their pupils’ starting points and current ability well. Teachers foster effective learning experiences through the use of skilful questioning and challenging activities: for example, when positive relationships allow for lively and insightful debate of the topic studied. When assessment information is less secure, the quality of work and level of challenge for pupils is weak.
- A regular cycle of teacher support and professional development is in place to improve the quality of teaching. The creation of the new middle leader roles is aimed at improving the quality of coaching for weaker teachers. Teaching in some areas has improved as a result. It has not improved enough across all year groups and subjects, which has led to variation in the experience of pupils and their progress over time. The quality of support staff and frequency of staff changes in science has been a challenge for the school when trying to improve the consistency and quality of teaching.
- Where teaching, learning and assessment are most effective, pupils are provided with opportunities to develop their understanding of underlying concepts in addition to securing the factual information required for the course. Teachers encourage pupils to explore their ideas while securing pupils’ progress through the use of appropriate assessment techniques, particularly in the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- When subject knowledge is strong, the learning that takes place is buoyant, with pupils happily maintaining a keen interest in their learning: for example, where clear links were developed between concepts and practical outcomes in biology. Where this is not the case, pupils become distracted as they are not challenged sufficiently.
- Careful attention is not paid to the progress of the most-able pupils, particularly in Years 8 and 9. Where most-able pupils’ needs are not met, then their learning slows. Teachers do not set consistently high goals for pupils to aspire to in all subjects and so pupils’ progress varies.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of the quality of pupils’ work. This means that some books become untidy and not all pupils are able to use their work to support their future studies. Feedback on pupils’ work does not always provide clear steps on how to improve.
- Support staff or additional adults are used most effectively when supporting individual pupils with specified needs, for example students from the school’s resourced provision and in music. When the direction of the teacher is not explicit, support staff are less able to make a positive difference to pupils’ learning.
- Pupils’ levels of literacy and numeracy are developing increasingly well; however, not enough has been done to secure a good level of literacy among disadvantaged pupils. Techniques for developing literacy, including phonics (the sounds that letters make), have not been developed enough for this group.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are not always supported effectively. At times, teachers do not plan for the needs of these pupils and their learning is hindered.
- The delivery of the school’s personal development programme is well planned and is incorporated into tutorial lessons throughout the school, developing pupils’ understanding of life in modern Britain.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is more effective. Pupils speak highly of the support that they receive inside and outside lessons, and appreciate the opportunities to assess themselves through the use of past examination questions. When teachers provide more vivid and detailed feedback, this enables pupils to extend their learning further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' awareness of how to become successful learners is not developed sufficiently. Pupils struggle to work effectively with newer staff, including supply staff, and their learning is hindered as a result.
- Pupils' understanding of issues such as radicalisation and bullying online are secure and they know how to keep themselves safe. At times, instances of unpleasant behaviour are not tackled effectively enough to meet leaders' high expectations.
- Most of the time pupils show a high level of self-awareness when socialising and working together. Where this is not the case, individuals indicate that they feel marginalised when their peers are less thoughtful.
- The school has engaged with external agencies to support the pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable or who have more complex needs. Consequently, pupils feel safe and are well supported in school. The majority of parents responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that their child is safe and happy at this school.
- Pupils feel that they are listened to when they have identified aspects they wish to change about the school, for example changes to the canteen menu, because they are represented on the governing body. Leaders actively encourage pupils to participate in events such as International Women's Day and make clear to them the roles of both women and men. Pupils' physical well-being is developed through the physical education curriculum and also through sports clubs offered after school. Inspectors observed strong teamwork leading to the achievement of collective goals while pupils were also observed reflecting on the moral dilemma of developing genetically specified medication in a Key Stage 5 biology lesson.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils conduct themselves well and show respect for the school's site most of the time. Instances when pupils' behaviour falls short of the school's standards are not addressed rapidly and consistently whether in lessons or during social time.
- The quality of some communal and classroom spaces is poor, demonstrating a lack of respect for the physical environment by a small number of pupils. Where pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning, the physical environment and their books are well kept and presentable. When lessons are less challenging and do not stretch pupils enough, this can lead to a few pupils disrupting learning with off-task behaviour.
- Attendance is above average for the whole school. However, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability contribute disproportionately to absence levels. School leaders recognise this pattern and have implemented plans to address the disparity. These plans have not yet improved the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions remains high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. The school is working to reduce the use of exclusions through a new behaviour policy and altered strategy for the school's use of alternative providers.
- Systems for checking up on pupils' punctuality is not thorough or accurate enough. Pastoral leadership roles are not clearly aligned to the school's targets for attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils who participate in off-site alternative provision are supported by individualised support plans. However, the school's leaders need to closely monitor pupils' progress and challenge provision when necessary, so that pupils' reintegration into school is timely and effective.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The attainment of pupils at Key Stage 4 fell in 2015, with the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics declining. However, attainment in mathematics rose slightly and the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers closed.
- Pupils' outcome grades when compared with their starting points when joining the school were secure in English, humanities and modern foreign languages but declined in science and mathematics. The school's development plan outlines clear strategies to improve these areas of the curriculum and the decision to switch all pupils onto GCSE science courses is designed to improve outcomes in science.
- The school's new assessment system is embedding but the reliability of some assessment information is not secure. While assessment information suggests that standards will improve this year, the likely extent of these improvements is not clear.
- Gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing in some subjects. Most-able pupils' outcomes are predicted to improve but work observed in books indicates that the level to which this group is stretched is not challenging enough in all subjects.
- Pupils are not wholly confident in their use of the assessment system, which results in variable progress.
- Leaders' decision to use lower-level qualifications as stepping stones towards GCSE has improved access to appropriate courses for the least able. For example, some of the least able in mathematics have already secured Level 1 qualifications that serve as a step towards their GCSE.
- Pupils' books indicate variation in the use of assessment information used by teachers when planning. This means that progress during lessons and over time is less clear in some cases and pupils make less progress towards their targets as a result.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs or disability outside the resourced provision has fallen although the school's assessment information indicates improving attainment. Leaders need to focus sharply on this vulnerable group in order to ensure rapid progress from their starting points.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils varies between subjects. Leaders have secured the improved progress of this group compared with their peers in languages and humanities; however, a gap remains in science and mathematics.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make strong progress compared with their peers.
- Pupils' preparation for the next stage of their education, training or employment is not secure as outcomes for pupils are not consistently strong across all subjects studied. Variations in the use of assessment information in school mean that leaders cannot tell with absolute clarity how much progress is being made by each individual.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- The leaders of the 16 to 19 study programmes are keenly aware of the areas for improvement in the sixth form. As a result, retention rates between Years 12 and 13 have improved significantly since 2014 as learners are provided with higher-quality advice and guidance when making their post-16 decisions. More learners from Plumstead Manor School now stay on in the sixth form, supported by taster days in Year 11.
- The sixth-form population is now stable and the fall in recent years has been stopped. Careers advice and guidance better prepare learners for their subsequent education, training or employment. The school's support for work experience is particularly strong for work-related subjects while learners in academic subjects receive less structured support.
- An increasing number of learners are now applying to university, rising sharply between 2013 and 2015 to 93%.
- Strengths in teaching, learning and assessment are more evident in the 16 to 19 study programmes. Opportunities are more often taken to stretch learners' understanding through skilful deployment of resources and challenging questioning. Where this is not the case, learners' progress is limited as misconceptions are not promptly corrected.

- Learners' outcomes in the sixth form remain in line with national averages but are stronger in work-related subjects such as financial studies. The school's current assessment information indicates that outcomes for girls are improving compared with boys, the gap widening at the highest grades. The gap between those who join the sixth form from Plumstead Manor School and those who join from elsewhere is closing.
- The retention of learners on study programmes in Year 12 requires attention in order to secure the best possible outcomes for learners. The progress of learners studying GCSE English and mathematics is not secure.
- Attendance and punctuality to lessons require sharper focus from leaders of 16 to 19 study programmes as current information indicates a decline in both measures. Learners' conduct is good and they provide a positive presence in the school during social times.
- Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well planned with opportunities for the sixth form to lead on whole-school events and take leading roles in decisions that will shape the school.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 100183 |
| Local authority | Greenwich |
| Inspection number | 10003252 |

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.

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| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Girls |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,447 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 293 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Sue Le Bas |
| Headteacher | Douglas Greig |
| Telephone number | 0203 260 3333 |
| Website | www.plumsteadmanor.com |
| Email address | info@plumsteadmanor.com |
| Date of previous inspection | 12–13 October 2011 |

Information about this school

- Plumstead Manor School is a larger than average 11–19 comprehensive school for girls with a mixed sixth form. It was last inspected in October 2011, when it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding given to schools for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The headteacher joined the school permanently in September 2015.
- The governing body was reconstituted in August 2015.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The school has an on-site resourced provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability and who have moderate learning difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The school uses two alternative providers for a small number of pupils who have complex needs. Both are located within the Royal Borough of Greenwich. They are Wizeup and Right Choice.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in 45 part-lessons in order to gather evidence which contributes to inspectors' evaluation of the school. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team and evaluated jointly. In addition, inspectors made observations of pupils' behaviour and conduct during break and lunchtime and also visited a sixth-form assembly and a careers presentation.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body including the chair, senior leaders, leaders of subjects and year groups, teachers and support staff, the school's local authority improvement adviser (by telephone) and several groups of pupils. Informal conversations were held with school staff and pupils during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed two 'Raising achievement of pupils (RAP)' meetings.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documents including those relating to school strategic planning; self-evaluation; behaviour and attendance; policy and procedures, including the school's single central register of checks made on staff; teacher performance management; management of trips and visits; safety and child protection; pupils' achievement and a wide range of work done by pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 36 responses to Parent View, and surveys completed online by 37 members of staff and seven pupils.

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
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