

Grestone Academy

Grestone Avenue, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham, West Midlands B20 1ND

Inspection dates

14–15 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
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
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Last academic year, pupils left Grestone Academy having made weak progress through key stage 2. This meant that they were not well prepared for Year 7.
- Despite improvement in teaching this year, pupils still have ground to make up. This is because they have not secured key skills in previous years.
- Leaders do not involve parents of children in the early years sufficiently well.
- Staffing turbulence led to weak teaching through the last academic year.
- Attendance remains stubbornly low.
- New governance arrangements are in place. The local board has not had enough time to demonstrate sustained impact on school performance.
- Middle leaders have not identified strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. As a result, teaching remains variable.
- Prior to the start of this academic year, disadvantaged pupils did not achieve well. This underachievement was owing to weak teaching and ineffective use of pupil premium funding.
- Pupils with differing prior attainment are not challenged sufficiently. This includes those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

The school has the following strengths

- Grestone Academy is an improving school.
- The newly appointed heads of school are committed to Grestone Academy. Their work has already led to improvement. They are effective leaders and are well supported by the executive principals.
- Senior leaders have ensured that the curriculum, teaching and progress have improved this academic year.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve well in phonics. Pupils who are new to the English language are well supported in their reading.
- Pupils behave well. They are keen to learn about each other's cultures. They are tolerant and respectful of others.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good, by ensuring that teachers make better use of information about pupils' prior attainment to set work which challenges pupils of different abilities effectively.
- Ensure that all groups of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged or who have SEN and/or disabilities, make strong and swift progress in order to leave each year group with the attainment they are capable of.
- Ensure that all leaders are held to account effectively by ensuring that:
 - governors check that strategies implemented by senior leaders improve aspects of performance, notably attendance and the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - senior leaders check that middle leaders carry out monitoring activities effectively.
- Ensure that senior leaders take action to engage parents in the work of the school, most notably in the early years.

External reviews of governance and the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken. This is to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Prior to the start of this academic year, there were many staff changes. This turbulence led to weak teaching which in turn meant that pupils did not progress as well as they should have done. Leaders have now secured a stable staff. Nevertheless, senior leaders have yet to ensure that pupils receive consistently good teaching.
- Middle leaders have been appointed to ensure that the teaching of different subjects improves. However, at present they do not carry out rigorous monitoring and evaluation to identify weaknesses in teaching and then make the changes needed.
- Last year, leaders did not spend pupil premium funding well. This meant that disadvantaged pupils did not make the progress they were capable of. Although these pupils are progressing better this year, they remain capable of achieving better outcomes.
- Leaders have drawn up clear strategies to improve the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils do not currently make sufficient progress in order to reach the standards they are capable of. There are early signs of improvement in teaching.
- The two heads of school are committed to ensuring that pupils receive high-quality teaching and achieve high standards. They convey to staff a clear urgency to improve school performance. The heads of school are very well supported by the two executive principals.
- Senior leaders made it a priority to secure a stable staffing structure. They can now invest in staff training, knowing that pupils will benefit from improved practice. The heads of school and executive principals have facilitated training through local teaching schools and the academy trust. Teaching is improving because teachers are putting their training into practice. As a result, pupils are making better progress this year.
- Since the start of this calendar year, leaders have designed and implemented a revised curriculum. Pupils are motivated to learn as they are interested in the topics taught and other activities, such as singing in the choir. This, coupled with pupils making better progress in all subjects so far this academic year, demonstrates that the curriculum is effective.
- The heads of school have developed leadership capacity well. They have engaged with a range of external organisations, including the Birmingham Education Partnership. These relationships have enabled newly appointed assistant heads of school and middle leaders to develop their leadership skills. Morale has improved as staff understand the part they play in the improvement of the school.
- The heads of school have implemented the trust's processes for managing the performance of teachers. Teachers appreciate the designated time to talk with the heads about their performance. Staff, including those teachers who are newly qualified, are keen to take on leadership responsibilities. Heads have responded by providing time for staff to work with current subject leaders.
- Leaders induct newly qualified teachers well at Grestone Academy. Throughout the first

year of teaching, their mentors ensure that they receive effective support. The teachers attend training events together. This enables them to reflect on their own work at the school and consider making changes. A recent example has seen the teachers modifying classroom reward systems.

- Leaders have ensured that the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding has been spent well. The funding has ensured that school's aims have been met, namely to increase competitive opportunities for pupils and to support pupils in adopting healthy lifestyles. This good practice is likely to be sustained as one of the newly qualified teachers is working with the current leader with a view to taking on the leadership role next year.

Governance of the school

- From the start of this academic year, governance has improved. However, it is yet to demonstrate that senior leaders will be held to account effectively.
- A local governing board for Grestone Academy was established at the start of this term. There is now a clear urgency to improve academic standards. Governors' ambition aligns well with that of senior leaders.
- Governors have ensured that there is sufficient time in meetings to discuss teaching performance. They have achieved this by discussing other matters, such as finance, in separate meetings. Governors understand strengths and weaknesses in current teaching.
- Governors recognise the benefits of pupils learning and playing in a diverse community. They ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern British society.
- Governors play their part in ensuring that there is effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are determined that equality is well promoted and that pupils challenge any form of discrimination.
- Governors ensure that they carry out their statutory duties appropriately.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Newly appointed staff, including newly qualified teachers, receive effective safeguarding training before they begin their work in school.
- Grestone Academy adopts the trust's safeguarding procedures. This helps the trust to check if the staff carry out their roles appropriately.
- Senior leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures are appropriate. Staff and pupils are vigilant, looking out for pupils' welfare. This helps to secure a strong safeguarding culture in and around the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is inconsistent. Strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of different subjects vary between year groups. Pupils with differing prior attainment do not receive work which challenges them consistently well. Typically, pupils are not given tasks which make them think hard enough. Pupils are capable of more challenging work.

- Teachers and teaching assistants do not update pupils' reading records, or comment in reading diaries, as frequently as leaders have requested. This means that teachers are not keeping track of pupils' reading skills. Pupils read books which are not sufficiently challenging. As a result, pupils do not make progress in a range of subjects they are capable of. Nevertheless, pupils enjoy reading the books they are given. They read fluently.
- Pupils are making good progress in writing this year. Teachers require them to write when studying a range of subjects. This is helping them embed correct writing skills. Owing to previously weak teaching, pupils continue to show errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- In mathematics, teaching ensures that pupils make good progress in number calculation and problem-solving. Pupils frequently complete work which requires them to practise existing skills and learn new ones. A lack of opportunity for mathematical reasoning means that pupils are less secure in this aspect of mathematics.
- Pupils apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills well across a range of different subjects.
- Teaching has improved this year. Teachers' assessments are accurate. They use information to ensure that tasks are selected which will challenge pupils better than previously. As a result, all groups of pupils are making stronger progress than that seen in previous years.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are confident and skilled in supporting pupils to form and develop their own opinions. This is because staff are secure in their subject knowledge. These skills were seen in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, where staff challenged pupils to think more deeply about fractions and decimals. However, some pupils lack confidence in articulating their views.
- As a result of ineffective use of funding, disadvantaged pupils were not taught well prior to the start of this academic year. The heads of school have ensured that teachers now know who these pupils are, and that their progress is tracked closely. The teaching of these pupils is now improving, although their progress remains variable. This includes those who are very able.
- The teaching of phonics and early reading skills is effective. Teachers use phonic techniques to support pupils' reading in a range of subjects. Staff ensure that pupils rehearse these skills frequently in a range of lessons. This means that all pupils, most notably those new to English, are well prepared to read harder books.
- Leaders have refreshed the school's homework policy this year. Teachers are able to identify pupils who are not managing to complete tasks at home, and to provide them with support. As a result, pupils are completing their homework more frequently this year.

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 are becoming more resilient in their learning, owing to better teaching. However, some pupils lack confidence in their learning. This is because they are not asked frequently enough to explain their thinking.
- Pupils feel safe. They talk about how staff and their peers look out for them. Bullying is very rare. Pupils recognise that any incidents are picked up and resolved quickly by staff.
- Pupils are very well mannered in lessons and when walking around the school building. Throughout the inspection, pupils were polite to each other and adults.
- Grestone Academy ensures good provision for pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Potentially vulnerable groups, including children looked after, are well supported this year. Effective use of the PE and sports funding ensures that pupils understand the benefits of adopting healthy lifestyles.
- Pupils receive good guidance about how to keep themselves safe as they grow up. This includes aspects relating to internet safety. Pupils talk clearly about how teaching supports their understanding of social networking.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The overall attendance rate remains low. There are too many pupils who are regularly absent. Senior leaders have therefore taken direct responsibility for this aspect of the school, and so far this year attendance is much better than previously. Fewer pupils are persistently absent.
- Leaders do not currently analyse the attendance rates of different groups of pupils rigorously. These groups include those pupils who enter the school part way through key stages and those who are disadvantaged. As a result, leaders are not clear whether strategies designed to improve attendance for these groups are effective.
- Pupils and parents express positive views about pupils' conduct in lessons and during before- and after-school clubs. Both groups say that there is occasional boisterous play at lunchtimes, which some pupils find unsettling.
- The curriculum engages pupils well in their learning. They enjoy their lessons. As a result, disruption in lessons is rare. Pupils understand the rewards and sanctions they receive as a result of their behavioural choices.
- Pupils collaborate well. They respect each other's views. Pupils recognise the benefits of learning in a diverse society. They want to learn about other's faiths and cultures and the curriculum enables them to do so. This contributes well to their understanding of British values.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Last year, pupils leaving Year 6 did not attain the standards they were capable of in reading and writing. Disadvantaged pupils made weaker progress than their classmates through key stage 2. This weak progress meant that pupils were not well prepared for their move into secondary education.

- This year, variability remains in the progress rates of pupils working from different starting points. There is no particular pattern to pupils' progress in every year group. For example, those key stage 1 pupils who need to catch up in their writing are making weaker progress than their peers, whereas in mathematics it is the most able pupils in key stage 2 that are not performing as well as their classmates.
- A larger proportion of pupils than that seen nationally move in and out of Grestone Academy. Many new arrivals speak English as an additional language. These pupils are capable of tackling harder work than teaching currently anticipates.
- New arrangements mean that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making better progress this year than previously. Nevertheless, progress is not yet consistently good.
- Last year, a similar proportion of pupils to the national average attained the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. This year, pupils in key stage 1 are making good progress in their understanding and use of phonic skills.
- Pupils are applying their reading and writing skills well in a range of subjects. As a result, pupils are making stronger progress this year than previously in reading and writing.
- Pupils are making similar rates of progress in mathematics this year to those seen previously. Progress is strongest in activities which require pupils to use calculation and problem-solving skills. This is most notable in Year 6. Pupils are making weaker progress in developing reasoning skills.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making better progress this year than previously. Progress rates remain variable between subjects and year groups. This is because tasks presented to the pupils do not challenge them consistently well.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making similar rates of progress to their classmates with similar abilities in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders are supporting staff well in recognising that pupils can be challenged more effectively. For example, leaders have set up weekly sessions for pupils to work with students at the secondary school which is part of the academy trust. As a result, Grestone Academy staff are seeing that their pupils are capable of attaining high standards.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- A large proportion of children in the early years provision came in to the setting during the last academic year. A high proportion speak English as an additional language. These admissions, coupled with staff not making accurate early assessments of children's abilities, meant that baseline information was not accurate. Consequently, it has been difficult for leaders to assess how well children made progress last year.
- Last year, too few children were well prepared in their learning in Year 1. Leaders have used funding to ensure that pupils who did not attain a good level of development are receiving better teaching this term. This is enabling this group of pupils, many of whom are disadvantaged, to catch up with their classmates.

- This year, staff are collating useful assessment information. This is being used to ensure that teachers design activities which both engage and challenge children better than previously. However, this information is not analysed rigorously. It does not explore the progress of different groups of children, such as two-year olds and those who are particularly able in certain aspects of learning.
- Leaders recognise that more work needs to be done to engage with parents. Currently, staff do not seek out the knowledge that parents glean from learning and playing with their own children. As a result, school information, contained in children's learning journals, is limited to the evidence seen in school.
- The heads of school are ambitious. One of the heads is experienced and knowledgeable about the early years. She is leading improvement effectively. The heads clearly articulate their vision for what the early years will become. However, their work has led to limited impact so far.
- The curriculum enables children, including those who are disadvantaged, to experience and progress through all aspects of learning. Staff draw on external expertise to help them improve their teaching in both the indoor and outdoor environments. Leaders, including those with responsibility for children who have SEN and/or disabilities, are developing good links with external services. As a result, support for pupils with specific needs is improving.
- The indoor and outdoor areas are well resourced. Children respect these environments and show this by moving around sensibly. Children's conduct is good. They show respect for each other. This is where the school's effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development begins.
- There is better teaching this year than previously. This is characterised by teachers and teaching assistants showing children how to use phonic skills in their learning. This is pivotal, given the need for many children to secure their early communication and language skills.

School details

Unique reference number	139904
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10037155

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	618
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eaton O'Connor
Heads of school	Beverley Hartigan Emma Ravenscroft
Telephone number	0121 675 6787
Website	www.grestoneacademy.com
Email address	head@grestoneacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	10–11 June 2015

Information about this school

- Grestone is much larger than the average-sized primary school. Its sponsor is Hamstead Hall Trust. The trust also includes a local secondary school.
- New governance arrangements were put in place at the start of this academic year. There is a local governing board.
- Two heads of school were appointed during the last academic year. They are supported by two executive principals who are based at the secondary school. The senior leadership team is made up of these leaders and the assistant heads of school.
- The school receives support from local educational organisations, including the Birmingham Education Partnership.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average. The largest ethnic group is Indian pupils, with a wide range of other ethnicities represented.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average. An increasing number of pupils new to the English language are joining the school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- The early years is made up of one part-time nursery class and three full-time Reception classes. There is provision for two-year-old children. At the time of the inspection, one child attended this provision.
- A high proportion of pupils join and leave the school at times other than the start and end of the academic year. This means that these pupils do not complete all their learning through each key stage at the school.
- Prior to this academic year, there was a high turnover of staff.
- In September 2017, five newly qualified teachers joined the school.
- A breakfast and after-school club is provided by the governing body. It was observed as part of this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- 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 observed teaching and learning in every year group. They visited 23 lessons, four of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, the chair of the governing body and other governors from the trust. Telephone conversations were held with two school improvement partners.
- Inspectors met with the two executive principals and with newly qualified teachers.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading. They listened to higher- and lower-ability pupils read.
- Inspectors examined work in pupils' books from a range of subjects.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documentation written to support school improvement. This included minutes from the first meeting of the local governing board and attendance information.
- Inspectors took account of the 18 replies to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. Inspectors also spoke with parents at the start of the school day and to those who asked to meet with inspectors.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's website.

Inspection team

Jeremy Bird, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Martina Abbott	Ofsted Inspector
Gareth Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Davis	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017