

Grestone Academy

Grestone Avenue, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham, B20 1ND

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leaders have not ensured that teaching is good enough to enable pupils to achieve well and reach the standards they are capable of by the end of Year 6. Leadership and management require improvement.
- Middle leadership is underdeveloped and the high proportion of temporary teachers prevents the formation of a strong, stable staff.
- Leaders do not check carefully or often enough that pupils' work shows good progress over time.
- The management of teachers' performance does not ensure that teaching is consistently good or better and ensure pupils' good progress.
- Pupils do not always gain knowledge and understanding in sufficient depth in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- A minority of parents do not ensure that their children regularly attend the academy.
- Pupils are not expected to produce their best work in all subjects.
- Teachers do not consistently use information about what pupils know and can do to set work that is challenging and ensure that all pupils achieve well, especially the most able.
- At times, in mathematics, pupils are moved onto new work before misconceptions in previous work are dealt with.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Marking does not clearly help pupils to improve their work.
- Teachers do not have enough opportunities to see good practice in teaching that is happening in the academy and, thereby, improve their own teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Although not yet good, achievement and teaching have steadily improved since the academy opened in October 2013.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children make good progress and are well prepared for the move to Year 1.
- Behaviour has improved significantly over time. Most pupils are well behaved, polite and friendly and enjoy their lessons.
- Pupils feel safe in the academy and relationships between adults and pupils are strong.
- The well-planned personal, social and health education programme underpins pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Governors know the aspects that need to improve, but have been unable to overcome weaknesses in teaching and achievement because of staffing difficulties.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in 33 lessons, two of which were seen jointly with the head of school and two with the deputy headteacher.
- A number of documents were examined, including assessment information about pupils’ progress, the academy’s self-evaluation document and its improvement plan. Other documents that were scrutinised included those related to the monitoring of teaching, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Discussions were held with the executive principal, head of school, deputy headteacher, staff, a parent, groups of pupils, seven members of the local governing body and two directors of the Hamstead Hall Trust.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and spoke to them formally and informally at break and lunchtime. Inspectors took account of pupils’ written work in English, mathematics, science, history and geography.
- Account was taken of the 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and inspectors had conversations with parents at the start of the school day. They also considered the 68 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lois Furness, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynda Townsend	Additional Inspector
Stuart Evans	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Grestone Primary became an academy on 1 October 2013. Its sponsor is Hamstead Hall Trust. When its predecessor school, Grestone Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged as inadequate and requiring special measures.
- The academy is governed by a local governing body, which includes parents, members of staff, local community representatives and representatives of the Hamstead Hall Trust.
- The academy is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- A well above average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average. The largest ethnic group is Indian, but there are 16 other ethnicities represented. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average. An increasing number of pupils are joining the school from Eastern European countries and are at the early stage of learning English.
- The early years is made up of three full-time Reception classes.
- Since the academy opened, there has been a high turnover of staff. The head of school and deputy headteacher were appointed in January 2014 and three other senior leaders were appointed in September 2014. During the inspection, there were four temporary teachers, two newly qualified teachers and two teachers who had only been working in the school since Easter 2015.
- In 2014, the results of Year 6 pupils in the end of key stage National Curriculum assessments were not included in the government performance tables.
- A breakfast and after school club operates on the academy site. It is managed by the governing body and is included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement in Years 1 to 6 by:
 - all teachers having high expectations of the quantity and quality of work pupils should complete in all subjects
 - work in lessons consistently challenging all pupils, particularly the most able, so that they make faster progress
 - teachers addressing pupils' misconceptions in mathematics before moving on to new work
 - providing opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects
 - marking helping pupils to improve their work
 - sharing the best practice within the academy so teachers can improve their own skills.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - managing teachers' performance to improve the quality of teaching and making staff accountable for the progress of pupils
 - developing middle leadership in order to increase the academy's capacity for rapid improvement
 - increasing the frequency and rigour of checking pupils' written work to confirm that pupils are making good progress in all subjects
 - providing a curriculum in Years 1 to 6 that deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding in the full range of National Curriculum subjects
 - working with the minority of parents who do not ensure their children attend the academy regularly to reduce pupils' absence.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The academy has not improved sufficiently for its overall effectiveness to be good. The full effect of some measures to improve teaching and achievement has been delayed by staffing difficulties. Although gains have been made, particularly in improving some pupils' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning and a culture of high expectations regarding teaching and pupils' achievement has not yet been established.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are in place and objectives for staff are linked closely to improving teaching and pupils' achievement. However, these systems have not ensured consistently good teaching and learning. Joint observations of teaching by inspectors and senior leaders confirm that leaders are accurate assessors of the quality of learning in the classroom. However, observations of classroom practice are not carefully considered alongside the longer-term progress of pupils, as shown in their books. Consequently, self-evaluation is over-generous.
- The work in pupils' books is not checked often enough to confirm consistently good achievement in all subjects. Monitoring of pupils' work is best in English and mathematics, where leaders have identified strengths and areas requiring improvement and have shared this information with staff. However, pupils' work in subjects, such as science, history and geography is not regularly checked and progress is often slow in these subjects.
- Middle leadership is underdeveloped. Teachers who had leadership responsibilities previously have given up their roles or left the academy and have not yet been replaced. Senior leaders have taken charge of English and mathematics and this is sufficient to sustain some improvement in these subjects, but not enough to ensure progress is good in all National Curriculum subjects.
- Middle leaders who are being developed currently, such as the early years leaders, the special educational needs co-ordinator and the leader working with pupils who speak English as an additional language, are becoming increasingly effective and are improving provision.
- The senior leadership team rigorously tracks pupils' progress and checks that teachers' assessments are accurate. They quickly identify those pupils who are falling behind and need additional support. Leaders recognise more needs to be done to improve teaching so that it provides a consistently good level of challenge for all pupils, including the most able, across the school.
- Most parents have a good level of confidence in the work of the academy and can see improvement in their children's learning since the academy opened. However, despite the efforts of leaders to improve attendance, a small minority of parents do not ensure their children attend regularly. The Hamstead Hall Trust is supporting the academy in trying to rectify this through the appointment of an attendance officer.
- All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, but not always in sufficient depth to ensure good gains in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Extra-curricular clubs, including the after-school club and activities such as international week and visits and visitors to the academy, help to enrich pupils' learning.
- There are strengths in the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The programme for personal, social and health education provides pupils with good guidance. Core values, such as honesty, respect and tolerance, are fostered carefully and the academy promotes equality of opportunity well. This ensures good relations are promoted and there is no discrimination. Pupils are appropriately prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The primary physical education and sport premium has been used effectively to pay a specialist coach to improve teachers' knowledge and confidence and to extend the range of after school sports and dance clubs available. This has helped to improve pupils' skill levels and increased their participation in sporting activities.
- Pupil premium funding has been used suitably to employ extra staff to enhance pastoral care and to

support pupils more intensively in lessons. Some impact is evident on improving disadvantaged pupils' progress, thereby narrowing the gaps with other pupils.

- The early years leaders have been effective in improving teaching and, as a result, children make good progress in the Reception classes.
- Pupils are better behaved because the senior leadership team have worked hard to make sure the behaviour policy is effective. The vast majority of pupils understand and follow the agreed rules. Staff manage behaviour well in the classroom, which has led to positive climate for learning within the academy.
- Leaders make sure that pupils are safe and the academy's safeguarding arrangements meet all national requirements and are effective.
- The Academy Trust has provided effective advice and support, which have led to improvements in leadership, behaviour and the fabric of the building. It has worked closely with leaders in managing the many staffing difficulties, which it says, are now finally resolved.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The local governing body has been effective in securing improvement since the academy opened. Governors are fully aware of their role and responsibilities. They have made good appointments to leadership posts and have challenged and supported leaders to eradicate inadequate teaching and to secure improvements in pupils' behaviour and safety.
 - Governors have an accurate view of where weaknesses remain and have good knowledge of how underperformance is tackled. They ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the management of teachers' performance and that teaching performance is suitably linked to pay.
 - Governors regularly discuss pupils' assessment information but, as yet, have not been able to compare pupils' achievements in this academy with those nationally, as Raiseonline has not been available.
 - Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it has in making a difference to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
 - Governors work well with academy leaders to ensure safeguarding requirements are met and all governors have received up to date training. They are well informed about their responsibility to ensure pupils are kept safe from the dangers of radicalisation. Eager to improve their own expertise, a review of governance has recently taken place.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The academy provides an orderly purposeful environment and pupils conduct around the building and in the playground is good. Pupils are polite, friendly and are proud of their academy and their uniform.
- Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy the activities in class. They become involved in their tasks and show perseverance when they encounter difficulties. Pupils are keen to talk about their work and take a pride in their successes.
- Pupils say that other pupils' behaviour is good and does not worry them. They understand the system for rewarding good behaviour and preventing inappropriate behaviour. Leaders updated the academy's behaviour policy in 2014 and established a firm approach to dealing with aggressive behaviour. Therefore, the number of exclusions rose sharply, but then declined and continues to reduce.
- The breakfast club provides a cheerful and relaxed start to the day for pupils who attend. It makes a positive contribution to pupils' social development, as well as giving them a healthy breakfast.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe. At break times and lunchtimes, levels of supervision are good. The academy's well-planned approach to pastoral care means that pupils know that there is always an adult to talk to if they are worried or upset.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying such as racist or cyber bullying and say that incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with effectively by adults. They are clear that the use of racist or homophobic language is unacceptable.
- The register of adults who work at the academy fully meets requirements. Staff training in safeguarding is also up-to-date and staff have a good level of awareness about potential risks to pupils, including in relation to extremism, radicalisation and other social issues relating to pupils' well-being.
- The senior leaders and inclusion staff work well together to ensure a strong network of support is in place for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They keep other staff well informed about any concerns and what is being done for these pupils.
- Leaders have worked intensively to improve pupils' attendance since the academy opened. The impact of the work is that attendance has improved for the majority of pupils and is broadly average. However, a minority of parents do not appreciate the importance of their children attending regularly and this negatively affects the overall attendance statistics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is improving, but it is not consistently good enough to ensure good achievement.
- Pupils at times, produce good-quality work in English and mathematics, but teaching across the academy is not good enough to ensure progress is consistently secure in reading, writing and mathematics. In other subjects, pupils produce too little work or make careless mistakes. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of the quality or quantity of pupils' work and pupils' progress is inconsistent. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects such as science, history or geography.
- The level of challenge provided by the work set does not always ensure that pupils of all abilities are stretched. Too many tasks are the same or very similar for all abilities. This practice has an adverse impact on the progress made by all pupils, particularly the most able. Teachers do not always move these pupils on to harder work when they find the task too easy in lessons.
- In mathematics, teachers often identify where pupils are struggling with new learning. However, they do not routinely help pupils to understand their mistakes and, thereby, improve. Pupils often begin new topics before they have mastered the previous learning.
- Teachers' marking is not sufficiently helpful in showing pupils how they can improve their work. Comments do not always focus enough on informing pupils precisely what they need to do in order to move on to a higher level, nor do all teachers expect pupils to follow the useful advice given. Therefore, mistakes continue. Marking is more helpful and detailed in writing than in other subjects.
- The teaching for disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs ensures they gain reasonable basic levels in key skills. Like other pupils in the academy however, teaching for these pupils requires improvement. This is because the support given to them is not always appropriate to ensure good progress.
- There is a good atmosphere for learning and good relationships between adults and pupils, based on mutual respect and good management of behaviour in lessons are helping to improve the progress pupils are making.
- The 'How Language Works' approach to the teaching of writing is starting to improve pupils' knowledge of

vocabulary and the features of different types of writing. It is particularly helpful in developing the spoken language skills of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.

- Teaching is good in the early years because the activities are well matched to what children know and can do and so children make good progress. The learning activities are stimulating and engage the interest of all the children.
- Teachers ensure pupils read frequently. Pupils read a wide range of literature and are encouraged by teachers to try authors who are new to them. Most pupils enjoy reading and an increasing number of them read fluently by the time they leave the school. Younger pupils are improving their phonic skills through improved teaching.
- In all year groups, there is some good practice in teaching, such as questioning. This good practice is not shared routinely with teachers who would benefit from additional support.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils are not making enough progress to overcome weaknesses in their achievement from the past. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is generally too low, even given pupils' starting points when they entered the academy. Achievement is improving, but is not consistent enough to be good.
- There are no national test data yet available for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, but current assessment information shows that attainment in both year groups is below last year's national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Not enough pupils are attaining the higher levels in all subjects. Although in all year groups, most pupils are making expected progress, too few pupils make better than expected progress, which is needed if attainment is to rise to match national levels. Pupils are not yet prepared well enough for their secondary education.
- The most-able pupils in each cohort make the same variable progress as their classmates. While it is sometimes good, overall their achievement requires improvement. This is because teaching does not always challenge them sufficiently.
- Current data, supported by inspection evidence from observing learning and scrutiny of pupils' written work, indicate that disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress than previously, but this is not at a fast enough rate to close the gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. As there were no published results in 2014, it is not possible to comment on gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school or others nationally at that time.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from the extra help they receive. They make good progress in small-group teaching sessions. In lessons, their progress is similar to that of other pupils.
- Last year, the proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics (the sounds letters make) was below average. Following effective professional development and greater stability in staffing, phonics is now taught more methodically and rigorously. More opportunities are provided for pupils to use these skills in their lessons, which have led to improvements in reading this year.
- Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make good progress in improving their communication skills. This is a result of good bilingual support and a strong emphasis on improving vocabulary.
- Many children join the early years with attainment below that typical for their age, with particular weaknesses in personal, social and emotional development and language. Children make good progress and, this year, approximately 70 per cent of children have achieved a good level of development.

The early years provision**is good**

- The early years provision is well organised and the early years leaders are effective. Provision and progress are better in the early years than in the main academy because teaching is consistently good. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to capture evidence of what children can do and skilfully plan learning activities using this information. Achievement and teaching are, therefore, good. Children are prepared well to start in Year 1.
- Teachers plan activities that appeal to children's interests and successfully extend their learning. Through making salt dough bugs, for example, children were encouraged to think creatively and make up a story about their models. Children are encouraged to use their phonic skills when writing simple sentences. Phonics is taught well and almost all children recognise letters and the sounds they make.
- Most-able children are challenged well through adults having high expectations. Children were seen grouping objects in pairs, which resulted in them confidently and accurately counting in twos to 20. Children with disabilities and those who have special educational needs, and those who are at an early stage of learning English are well supported by staff. This has a positive impact on the rapid progress that these pupils make.
- Children's behaviour is good. They get on well together, share equipment cheerfully and take their turn in an orderly way. They listen attentively to the teacher and follow routines well, including helping to tidy up at the ends of sessions. Children are taught to care for each other, as was seen when one boy fell over. Two children spontaneously went to him, checking he was not hurt and then helping him back on his feet.
- Good arrangements are in place to keep children safe. Parents and carers value the care shown towards their children by the staff.

What inspection judgements mean

School	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

Unique reference number	139904
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	450301

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	591
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harkamal Sandhu
Headteacher	Joanne Gray (Head of School)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 675 6787
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