

Inspection of Grestone Academy

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

Inspection dates:

5–6 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a large and happy school. It welcomes pupils from a rich mix of cultures and backgrounds. Leaders and staff build very good relationships with them. They work hard to support pupils. The school is inclusive. It is a safe and welcoming community. Many pupils are in the early stages of learning English. Leaders and other staff help these pupils settle in well.

Pupils are kind to each other. They grow in confidence the longer they are at the school. Staff usually deal with any bullying without delay. Most parents are happy with the school. A small minority believe the school should respond better to concerns they raise.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are better than when the school was last inspected. Staff work well to support pupils' personal development. A new curriculum is helping pupils learn and remember more. But leaders know there is more to do before the quality of education is good.

Staff help children settle into Nursery and Reception classes. Staff are very caring. Some early years staff know children and their families very well. Some learning in the early years lacks focus. A new early years leader will join the school in the summer term.

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

Early reading is a priority for leaders. Pupils start reading as soon as they start school. A new approach to phonics began this year. It helps pupils learn in an organised way. Reading books help to develop pupils' phonics knowledge well. Some temporary staff and teaching assistants lack specialist knowledge. This slows some pupils' learning. A new library and displays in classrooms promote a love of reading. Pupils enjoy reading interesting books that reflect their different ethnic and faith backgrounds.

The content of the mathematics curriculum is often taught well to pupils. Some staff have gaps in their knowledge of this subject. They are not always expert enough in making sure that pupils do work at the right level. Because of this a few pupils find work too easy. Others find it too difficult.

Leaders are improving the other subjects. The curriculum in science and in most other subjects is being altered. Content in these subjects is linked to the local area. It is relevant to the pupils. Leaders are starting to set out what pupils should learn and by when. But this has begun very recently. Leaders know that staff need more training so that they can teach these subjects well. Specialist teachers from the trust deliver physical education to pupils. This subject is very well organised. Pupils learn well in physical education.

Outcomes are improving. More children reached age-related expectations at the end of Reception. Outcomes improved in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils did better in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2019 than in the past. However, improvement in writing has been slower.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. They usually do as well as other pupils taking starting points into account. Pupils who are disadvantaged also do as well as others.

Pupils who are at the early stages of learning English are well supported. Teachers help them in classrooms. They have extra lessons that build confidence and fluency. All leaders and staff work towards making sure that pupils 'keep up' instead of having to 'catch up'.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop personally. Staff encourage all pupils to believe in themselves. Pupils are proud of their work. Most are independent and determined. They want to do well for themselves and others. They enjoy being leaders. Many attend lunchtime clubs. They learn how to be active citizens. They show care towards other pupils.

Instability in the staffing of early years has led to a delay in improving provision in the Nursery and Reception classes. Many children join the Nursery and Reception classes with low levels of development. Staff provide ample support for children and families. Children are happy. They work and play together; but activities often lack focus. Some Nursery equipment needs updating. Routines are more settled in Reception than in Nursery. The welfare requirements of the early years are met.

Many school leaders and other staff joined the school after the last inspection. They are leading effectively. They are improving the school after an unsettled period. They have improved pupils' behaviour, attitudes and personal development. Attendance is better. Improvement in the curriculum and in early years is slower. A few staff believe that too many initiatives occur at the same time.

Trustees have taken robust action to improve leadership and governance. The local governing body is now effective. It uses its experience to hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They know who to speak to if they are upset or worried. Staff also know what to do if they have safeguarding concerns. They are aware of local and wider risks to pupils. This includes keeping pupils safe from extremism or other harm.

Leaders share relevant information quickly. Key staff are aware of any difficulties faced by pupils. Staff assess the risks to pupils regularly. They act on any concerning information quickly.

Leaders and other communicate well with external agencies. They keep careful records. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff lack knowledge of teaching phonics. Additionally, lack of subject knowledge in mathematics means that teachers do not always give pupils the right work. These weaknesses mean that some pupils do not learn as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff have sufficient subject knowledge, and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge, to plan and deliver the curriculum effectively in core subjects.
- Leaders have not yet agreed the subject content that pupils should learn, and by when, in science and the foundation subjects. This limits pupils' learning and makes it inconsistent. Leaders should ensure that teachers know what to teach so that pupils can learn enough subject content.
- Some teachers and other staff also lack the subject expertise needed to teach the foundation subjects well. Leaders should ensure that all staff have enough training, so they can teach these subjects effectively.
- Some children's behaviour in the Nursery is unsettled because of a lack of established routines. Their restlessness has a negative impact on their learning. Staff should establish more settled routines for learning in the Nursery
- Learning activities in the Nursery do not always have enough focus. This means that learning time is lost. Staff need to plan for children's early learning in a more precise way.
- In the early years, some equipment for learning is outdated. It does not interest children as much as it should. The learning environment needs to be improved by updating old equipment.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	139904
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10122464
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	580
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Brown
Headteacher	Emma Ravenscroft
Website	www.grestoneacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has not undergone any significant changes since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We spoke with pupils and observed them learning. We also looked at their books. We observed their behaviour around school. We also spoke with leaders and other staff. We considered a range of key information, including documents about pupils' behaviour, attendance and safety.
- We looked in detail at how well the school teaches early reading, mathematics, science and physical education. We also looked more briefly at the curriculum in the other subjects. We visited clubs before and after school.
- We met with members of the local governing body and representatives of the trust. We spoke with school improvement partners, including a national leader of education. We spoke with parents and carers. We took account of 30 responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 16 written responses.

- Inspectors met with leaders about the school’s safeguarding procedures. Inspectors reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and pupils who have left the school. Inspectors spoke to pupils, parents and staff about how safe pupils are at school.

Inspection team

Mike Cladingbowl, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Benjamin Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
David Walker	Ofsted Inspector

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