

Gee Cross Holy Trinity CofE (VC) Primary School

Higham Lane, Gee Cross, Hyde SK14 5LX

Inspection dates	10–11 November 2015
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils across the school make good progress. The tasks set for pupils do not take sufficient account of what they already know and do not stretch them enough.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not provide clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. There are too few opportunities for pupils to build on what they already know and to practise and consolidate newly acquired knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The teachers do not ensure that pupils always present work and handwriting to the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils' achievement is too low in the early years and Key Stage 1.
- Leaders and governors have not improved the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are not clear enough to ensure that the necessary improvements happen quickly. The school's self-evaluation is overly positive.
- There has been a delay in updating some crucial policies and in ensuring that they cover all the necessary areas.
- The proportion of pupils regularly absent from school is higher than average and increasing.

The school has the following strengths

- The pupils are well behaved in and around the school. They respect each other and their teachers and relationships in the school are good.
- The curriculum is rich and varied and provides pupils with a very wide range of opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, as well as disadvantaged pupils, make good or better progress by the end of Key Stage 2.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement so that they are consistently good across the school by ensuring that:
 - teachers have the highest expectations of every child
 - all pupils, particularly the most able, are provided with demanding tasks that build on their existing knowledge, skills and understanding, and extend them further
 - pupils' handwriting and presentation are always at the highest standards of which they are capable
 - marking and feedback give clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and follow-up activities enable pupils to practise, apply and consolidate what they have learnt.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the school's self-evaluation takes full account of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the school
 - setting more ambitious goals for the future and ensuring that plans for their achievement are precise and include clear criteria and timescales for evaluating the effectiveness and speed of the resulting improvement
 - working with the local authority and the police to stop illegal parking outside the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- There have been considerable staff changes at the school since it was last inspected. Three quarters of the teachers have been appointed since then. The restructured senior leadership team has only been in place since September 2015 and three of its members have only recently arrived at the school. Before their appointment, there was a long period of uncertainty during which results declined, especially in the early years and at Key Stage 1.
- The newly appointed senior leaders have been quick to identify where the main weaknesses in the school lie and are working to bring about the necessary improvements. For example, they have conducted a thorough review of English across the school and of provision in the early years and Key Stage 1, and have drawn up action plans and a programme of training to tackle the main weaknesses. They have also worked with the headteacher to produce an overall evaluation and improvement plan for the school.
- The written evaluation highlights the positive aspects of the school but does not make it clear what the weaknesses are. Therefore, it is difficult for parents and others to get an accurate view of the school.
- The improvement plan does not make clear exactly what the school is aiming to do, how it is going to do it and over what period of time. It also lacks any clear measures which can be used to check on whether enough progress is being made. The same is true of the action plans for English and the early years. Where specific targets have been set, they are not high enough. For example, one of the targets for the early years is that the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development next year should be in line with the most recent average nationally. However, on the basis of figures to date, the national average is likely to rise. This, together with the fact that the children arriving at the school already have a considerable range of skills, indicates that this target is not challenging enough.
- The school has set individual targets for each child and these are now being tracked regularly. However, if the overall targets for the school are not high enough, the individual targets are also likely to be too low.
- The school's curriculum is well planned around a range of themes and topics which ensure that pupils have the opportunity to learn and develop skills in the full range of subjects. In addition, pupils are given the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of enrichment activities which include working with visiting artists and musicians and taking part in performances with professional orchestras. The pupils who spoke to the lead inspector were very enthusiastic about the wide range of opportunities offered to them.
- Parents of pupils with disabilities, who spoke to the lead inspector, were highly complimentary about the support that their children are receiving, to ensure that they are able to take a full part in the life of the school. A range of additional help is provided for those pupils who have special educational needs. However, the policy of removing them from some foundation subject lessons, in order to give them additional support with English and mathematics, means that they do not receive their full entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The governors have allocated the additional government pupil premium funding to an appropriate range of activities to support those pupils who are eligible for it. However, in the documents on the website, the intended impact of the expenditure is presented in very general terms. Therefore, it is difficult to know precisely what the intended outcomes are and to what extent they have been realised.
- The school uses its primary school sports funding very effectively to ensure that pupils learn and take part in a wide range of sports. These include volleyball, hockey, football, tag rugby, cross-country, lacrosse, tennis, cricket, athletics, dancing and cheerleading. Boys and girls have equal access to these activities. At the time of the inspection, one of the newly formed girls' football teams remained unbeaten in the local league. Good use is made of visiting coaches, not only to teach pupils but also to provide in-service training for teachers.
- The school has strong systems for safeguarding its pupils. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school works closely with a range of agencies to support pupils and parents who may be vulnerable. The safeguarding policy does not include reference to the 'Prevent' agenda or to proposed actions in case of suspected female genital mutilation. Senior staff have only very recently been involved in training on these issues. Despite action by the school, parents regularly park their cars on the

'No Waiting' signs outside the school. This, together with the speeding cars on the main road nearby, poses a risk to pupils.

- The majority of parents who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the school. This was also the case with the responses to Ofsted's online survey. Parents complimented the behaviour of pupils, the range of extra-curricular activities and the support provided for pupils with special needs and disabilities. Concerns about the school included high turn-over of staff, inadequate teaching in the past, infrequent homework and a perceived lack of sensitivity in the way that departures from the uniform policy were handled.
- Eight pupils, selected at random from Years 3 to 6, who had a meeting with the lead inspector, were unanimously positive about the school.
- The local authority has provided 'light-touch' monitoring for the school and recently conducted a review of the school.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body has full membership and a clear structure and systems for conducting its work. It includes people with a wealth of expertise and experience who are very supportive of the school. They recognise the improvements that need to be made but, for a variety of reasons, some of these, such as the restructuring of the senior leadership team, have not been implemented until recently. The impact of these changes on pupils' standards and progress has yet to be seen.
 - The governors work hard to ensure that pupils are provided with a broad and stimulating curriculum and manage resources well to make this happen.
 - There has been a delay in publishing the reviews of several key policies. At the beginning of the inspection, the school's website was not meeting requirements, although an update took place during the inspectors' visit.
 - The governors have appropriate systems for performance management.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school is variable and particularly inconsistent in Key Stage 1.
- Most pupils work with concentration and interest and can be trusted to keep focusing on a task, even when not being directly overseen by a member of staff. They work well in pairs and in groups to solve problems or to review their own and each other's work. Even the least confident are prepared to offer comments and suggestions when invited to do so. They relate well to each other and to their teachers and, in most classes, the atmosphere is positive and purposeful.
- The majority of the teachers have a good command of the subject that they are teaching and present it with enthusiasm. They provide their pupils with good models of spoken and written language, as well as good models of personal behaviour and conduct.
- Lessons are usually well planned and teachers make good use of resources to enliven their presentations, as well as to celebrate pupils' work. Most classrooms are well organised. However, the nature of the building and the arrangement of the furniture mean that, at times, some pupils find it difficult to see what is being demonstrated on the interactive whiteboard. Some pupils can only do so by looking over their shoulders.
- The teaching assistants play a very active and well-planned role in lessons. They know the pupils well and are able to adapt their approach to the needs of particular individuals or groups.
- The quality of teachers' marking is very variable. The comments in books rarely provide clear guidance on what pupils need to do to improve their work. In some instances, even when the teacher has highlighted an error or misunderstanding, there is limited opportunity for the pupils to practise and consolidate their new understanding in later work. Marking in subjects other than English and mathematics tends to be limited.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation is very variable, within and across classes. Very rarely do teachers comment on this. Pupils are not encouraged to pay consistent attention to developing good handwriting.

- In the lessons observed, teachers used a good range of questions to check on understanding but they often relied on answers volunteered by the pupils and rarely checked on the understanding of those who had not contributed.
- The school has recently established progress files for each class, in order to track their progress against their targets. However, the targets are based on performance to date. Given that many of these pupils have underperformed in the past, their targets are not likely to be reliable indicators of what the pupils are capable of doing. Examination of work in both key stages showed that pupils, particularly the most able, are not being challenged enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The pupils who spoke to the lead inspector said they all enjoyed coming to school. They felt safe in the school and on their way to and from home. They knew how to keep themselves safe, including when using social media, on the road and also near water and railway lines. They explained what they had to do in the case of a fire and described the opportunities they had to learn to ride their bikes correctly and safely.
- The Year 6 pupils spoke very highly of the 'Crucial Crew' initiative where older pupils have the opportunity to learn about the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse and of grooming. They knew about the various forms of bullying but said that there was very rarely any bullying in the school. If it did happen, it was dealt with quickly and robustly.
- A strength of the school is the provision it makes for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The daily act of collective worship is an important, carefully planned and meaningful aspect of the school's life. Pupils also regularly lead services in the local church. In addition, they learn about a range of world faiths and visit other places of worship, such as the Jewish synagogue in Manchester.
- Pupils are given frequent opportunities to reflect on international issues. Those who spoke to the lead inspector described how they had been examining the current refugee crisis and were planning to write to the Prime Minister setting out their view on how the country should respond. They also showed an awareness of their responsibility for the environment when describing their work as eco champions.
- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school through working as representatives on the school council, the eco team and as religious education ambassadors. They happily take responsibility for organising PowerPoint presentations and lead collective worship through a selection of interactive drama, music, poetry and prayer activities in assembly. Pupils are eager to take on responsibility and care for the younger members of the school. Sports ambassadors organise games and tournaments, while young leaders in sports lead lunchtime sporting activities or support after-school clubs. Year 6 pupils take responsibility for supervising movement in and out of school at breaktime. They relate well to each other and to adults and even the youngest will initiate interesting discussion with visitors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well around the school. They are very polite and even the youngest pupils do not have to be prompted to open doors or stand back for others.
- Pupils arrive on time at school and at lessons. They organise themselves well and work with concentration and enthusiasm. A notable element of the meetings and discussions with pupils was the way that they knew how to listen to each other, how to develop an idea and also how to present a contradictory view in a calm and measured way. In the playground, in lessons and in assembly, there is mutual respect between older and younger pupils and between pupils of differing abilities.
- In class, a few pupils occasionally lose concentration when explanations are too long or complicated. However, they do not disrupt others' learning.
- The great majority of pupils attend regularly and enjoy school. Overall attendance is similar to the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent is higher than across the country. The figures for this term indicate that attendance is not as good as it was at this time last year.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Standards are better at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1.
- Over the last two years, there has been a dramatic decline in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in the phonics screening at the end of Year 1. Results were above average in 2013 but well below average this year. Boys' results fell to half of what they were two years ago.
- In 2015, the attainment of seven-year-old pupils was in line with the national average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. Results at higher levels of performance were significantly lower than the average across the country. This reflects the historical underperformance in the early years. Set against what pupils entering this school can do, it is clear that pupils, especially the most able, have not been stretched enough academically.
- At Key Stage 2, the picture is better. At the end of last term, the proportion of 11-year-olds who reached the expected standards in English, reading and mathematics was in line with, or just above, national averages. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who reached or exceeded the expected standard was similar to, or better than, the average nationally.
- The school has recognised the need to arrest the decline in Key Stage 1. At the beginning of this term, a new member of the senior leadership team was appointed to be responsible for this area. Her work is already leading to improvements in the standards at this stage. However, there is still considerable work to be done to compensate for earlier underperformance by these pupils.
- At Key Stage 2, the work seen in classrooms and in books is better in Years 5 and 6 than in the previous two year groups. However, across the key stage, most-able pupils are not doing as well as they should do.
- Throughout the school, pupils with special needs and disabilities are performing as well as their fellow pupils, which shows that they are receiving effective support.
- By the time they are 11, the pupils at the school are appropriately prepared for the next stage of their education. However, they could be far better prepared if the provision across the school were more consistent.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Since her appointment two years ago, the early years leader has made a number of improvements to the provision. She has introduced medium and weekly planning, small social group activities, a new behaviour policy and involved teaching assistants more closely in the planning. She has also produced an action plan for further development. As with other plans in the school, this is not specific enough in terms of identifying precisely what changes are expected over specified periods of time.
- The majority of children enter the Nursery and Reception class with knowledge, skills and understanding that are broadly typical for their age, or slightly better than that. The progress which they make from their various starting points is not good enough. This is because teachers' expectations are too low, especially where higher-attaining pupils are concerned.
- The proportion reaching a good level of development dipped in 2014 but rose this year. The target for next year is that the proportion reaching a good level of progress should be in line with this year's national average. However, given that the national average is likely to rise and given the children's performance on entry, this is not ambitious enough.
- In the activities observed, the children did not make as much progress as they might because the teachers did not expect enough of them. For example, the children would take part in an initial discussion or activity and then go to work alone or in groups. At that point, the teachers did not intervene enough to help the children consolidate and build on what they knew. They also missed opportunities to develop the children's writing skills and to challenge the most able. In one lesson, for example, the children worked together to create sentences from random words on the board. As a follow-up activity, they repeated the exercise with different words. The children who could already write did the same activity as the rest, rather than being asked to use their more advanced skills and vocabulary to create sentences of their own.

- Pupils' progress is tracked on a half-termly basis, against their personal targets. However, these are not always sufficiently demanding. During the activities observed, teachers missed opportunities for further, informal assessment of the children as they worked.
- The curriculum is varied and has been extended to include a range of enrichment activities, such as a weekly 'welly walk' and visits to farms and museums. The children also have opportunities to take part in imaginative play, music and dance. The internal and external environments are attractive and stimulating.
- Strong links have been established with parents through welcome packs, visits by staff to children's homes before they come to the school, home-school diaries and regular meetings with parents. Through its website, the school also provides advice and information for parents, as well as a range of activities that they can do with their children at home.

School details

Unique reference number	106226
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10000445

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nathan Lee
Headteacher	Sue Lane
Telephone number	0161 368 2911
Website	www.geecross.tameside.sch.uk
Email address	head@geecross.tameside.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 January 2012

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the additional government pupil premium funding is well below the national average.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage with English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below the average nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at other than usual times is below the average across the country.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed learning in classes and when pupils worked in small groups. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about it. They listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills.
- Over the two days, inspectors spoke to parents as they brought their children to school. They also examined the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with eight pupils, selected at random from Years 3 to 6. He and his colleagues also spoke to children during breaks, lunchtimes, in classrooms and as they walked around the school.
- The inspectors analysed the results of Ofsted's staff questionnaire and also spoke to staff alone and in groups.
- They met three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, as well as a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and policies. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

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