

# Gee Cross Holy Trinity CofE (VC) Primary School

Higham Lane, Gee Cross, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 5LX

## Inspection dates

21–22 November 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is extremely accurate. Through precise and detailed improvement planning, leaders have successfully addressed the weaknesses identified at the last inspection.
- Teaching is effective in all classes. Teachers know their pupils well and carefully plan lessons that challenge pupils and build on what they already know. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers throughout school encourage pupils to have a 'can do' attitude and to 'have a try' at challenging work. This is having a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to their learning and on their progress. Staff and pupils have a desire to learn and do better. As a result, the school feels energised.
- The school has a broad curriculum, further enriched by a range of after-school activities. There is an extensive range of opportunities to take part in a sport. Leaders provide this exciting curriculum to ensure that pupils achieve well academically, and that they leave school as well-rounded individuals.
- The governing body effectively and rigorously checks the school's performance and holds leaders to account. The behaviour of almost all pupils in lessons and around school is excellent.
- Parents are overwhelming positive, especially about the school's values and ethos. Pupils feel happy and safe. They value all the experiences and opportunities offered.
- Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in core subjects are detailed and precise. Assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics is fairly new and not fully embedded.
- The focus on reading is having a positive impact on pupils throughout school. The teaching of phonics in key stage 1 is highly effective. In key stage 2, pupils' progress and attainment in reading is less good than in other subjects. In 2017, at the end of key stage 2, boys did not achieve as well as girls in reading and other subjects.
- The progress made by pupils throughout the school is good. The number of pupils reaching age-related expectations in key stages 1 and 2 is above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as other pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make rapid progress from their starting points.
- The early years provision is a strength of the school. Thorough transition arrangements and the good teaching of all adults results in most children making rapid progress from their starting points.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that at the end of key stage 2 the progress and attainment of boys is in line with that of girls, especially in reading.
- Extend the scope of the existing assessment systems to include tracking of pupils' progress in the full range of curriculum subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has successfully addressed the areas of weakness identified at the last inspection. All the work of the school has been reviewed and leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is now highly accurate.
- The local authority and diocesan school improvement partners have worked together to support senior leaders to put into place rigorous monitoring systems. These systems have resulted in improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. These systems are now embedded in the practice of the school.
- Senior leaders have written a detailed school improvement plan. This is being used to ensure that priorities are shared with all staff, progress towards each priority is regularly reviewed and success evaluated. In addition to the whole-school improvement plan, each middle and subject leader has a related action plan. Governors also have a governance improvement plan. This strong whole-school team spirit drives rapid improvements in all aspects of the school's performance.
- The headteacher and governors have taken determined action to deal with inadequate teaching. The leaders' rigorous recruitment process to attract high-quality new and experienced staff has been successful and key to improvements in teaching and learning. Staff say they feel rejuvenated by the changes to the school. They now work collaboratively, motivating each other to do better. Staff agree that they very much enjoy working at Gee Cross.
- There is a strong culture of learning in the school. Leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils. All school leaders have a very strong professional ethos that includes a clear and determined focus on securing the best outcomes possible for pupils. The focus on teaching pupils to have a 'can do', positive attitude to learning and challenge is modelled by teachers. Teachers have the same positive attitude to their work. The school feels energised by the desire to learn.
- The deputy headteacher has developed detailed, highly effective systems to track and monitor pupils' progress. These systems have been integral to raising standards throughout school. Leaders identify pupils who may be falling behind and take swift action to make sure that they catch up and keep up with their peers.
- The broad and balanced curriculum is a strength of the school. This curriculum is enriched by outdoor learning as well as an extensive range of after-school activities and clubs. Subject leadership is strong. Subject leaders are passionate about the value of teaching a full range of subjects. They share the belief of senior leaders and governors that a range of interesting, exciting subjects and lessons develop children into well-rounded individuals.
- Staff feel well led and managed. They say they are supported and challenged in equal measure. They value highly the opportunities for professional development offered by school leaders. They also value the fact that leaders are responsive to their requests to attend training. Staff are able to clearly relate their learning to the impact it has on their teaching. For example, the English and mathematics subject leaders were fully

aware of how attending training on moderating pupils' work had added greater rigour to the assessment processes in school.

- Parents who responded to the online questionnaire, and those inspectors met, are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents feel that the strong values and moral ethos of the school have always been there. However, in recent years, the expectations staff have of pupils have increased noticeably for the better. They say the school has improved rapidly during this time. They feel that staff are now motivated and enthusiastic about their work.
- Spiritual, social, moral and cultural education is threaded through much of the work of the school and is part of its ethos. Pupils' learning about tolerance and respect is clearly lived out daily. Religious education (RE) makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral and social aspects of pupils' development but is more limited with regard to the cultural aspect. Teaching about fundamental British values is linked to the teaching of broader Christian values.
- Leaders ensure that the additional funding provided through the pupil premium supports the learning and achievement of the small number of disadvantaged pupils. These pupils make good progress and achieve in line with their peers.

## **Governance of the school**

- The governing body has been transformed; only two of the current governors were in post at the time of the last inspection. The governing body is passionate, committed and exceptionally knowledgeable about the strengths and weaker points of the school. Governors are rigorous in all they do and have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils. They share the drive and ambition of school leaders. Together they have secured rapid improvements in outcomes for pupils.
- Governors know that a strength of the school is its ethos, values and moral purpose. Governors describe this as 'the being of the school'.
- Governors are well trained and use their learning to challenge and support school leaders in equal measure. For example, they requested information in greater detail to enable them to understand the school better and to work as effectively as possible.
- In order to improve partnership with staff, governors have spent time with individual teachers asking challenging questions about the progress of pupils, and also about staff workload and well-being. Governors are well informed about the difference between the strategic role of the governing body and the operational role of the senior leaders. Governors are always mindful of this difference when working with staff.
- In order to continually strengthen the skills of governors, the governing body has adopted the same 'growth mindset' as staff and pupils. This has been highly effective in allowing new governors to develop and undertake the role with confidence. In response to talking with parents and to support the growth mindset principles, governors have just introduced their own 'Governor Award Scheme'. The award is presented to pupils who show exceptionally positive attitudes to learning, or who make an outstanding contribution to school life.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. All staff and governors are well trained. There is a written training cycle that ensures that all areas of abuse are addressed and later revisited.
- The headteacher is the designated lead for safeguarding. She has detailed systems in place to record all concerns and communication with other agencies involved. She is vigilant about following up referrals, including when pupils leave the area to attend schools in other local authorities.
- The headteacher works closely with the local authority designated officer for safeguarding to ensure that referrals are followed up and concerns escalated as required.
- School leaders are proactive in keeping pupils safe. For example, the headteacher has recently attended training about sexting before any direct concerns have been reported in school. Pupils are taught about e-safety during computing and other lessons. During a computing lesson, inspectors observed pupils using tablets set up to work offline with passwords. Pupils understood why these actions were necessary.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teaching is effective in all classes. Teachers know their pupils well and make use of their good subject knowledge to carefully plan lessons that challenge pupils and build on what they already know. Teachers throughout the school encourage pupils to have a 'can do' attitude and to 'have a try' at challenging work. This is having a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to their learning and on their progress. Teaching is effective in all classes.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed by teachers during lessons. Their work with pupils is good. The teaching assistants maintain a good balance between providing support and letting pupils complete the work for themselves.
- Pupils enjoy school and appreciate their teachers. Pupils feel teachers give them challenging work and support them to succeed. Pupils commented on how much they had enjoyed having a poet in school teaching them to write their own poems.
- The school-wide focus on encouraging pupils to have a growth mindset is highly effectively in building resilience in all pupils and fostering a positive attitude to learning. Pupils were able to explain what was meant by having a growth mindset. They said it helped them, 'Because teachers won't give you an answer but guide you. You're not allowed to give up.' The impact of this approach was seen during lesson observations. A pupil was struggling to calculate the area of a compound shape in a mathematics lesson. He was simply and gently reminded to have a go: he did and got the answer correct.
- Leadership of mathematics and English is very strong. Leaders of these subjects do a regular scrutiny of pupils' workbooks. The feedback they provide for teachers is raising standards of teaching in both subjects. Leadership of all other subjects is also strong. Subject leaders are passionate about their subjects and confident in carrying out the

role of subject leader. However, the information available to them about pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is limited. Leaders have begun to establish termly tracking of pupils' progress towards their end-of-year objectives in all subjects but this is not in place fully.

- The teaching of reading has been identified as a whole-school priority so reading has a very high profile in school. A range of initiatives to promote reading have been introduced by senior leaders such as a new library with new books and an after-school reading club. Individual home-school reading records provide strong evidence of the additional support from adults at school and home. Where support from home is limited, teachers ensure that pupils read to staff. In addition, reading volunteers work in school with identified pupils, especially those who do not have the opportunity to read to an adult at home.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read. They found no difference in the attitudes to reading of girls and boys. They all read with confidence and enjoyment. Pupils successfully used their knowledge of phonics to decode unknown words. For example, one pupil sounded out the word 'cryptid', worked out what it meant from reading the rest of the text and was then able to answer questions about his views on cryptids.
- A range of specialist teachers and instructors deliver subjects including Spanish, computing and music. Pupils say they love these lessons. Pupils benefit from being taught Spanish by a native speaker and have very good pronunciation. Pupils are confident to speak Spanish and the progress from one year group to the next was evident during the inspection. In Year 3, pupils were naming body parts and by Year 6, pupils were confidently using question forms.
- The teaching of physical education is highly effective. The pupils take part in competitions in a number of sports. They very often win and are currently champions in the local area in 11 sports. Pupils won joint first place in a volleyball competition at the time of the inspection.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's promotion of the 'growth mindset' encourages pupils to tackle challenging work. It is having a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to their learning and on their progress.
- Pupils are well prepared to be good citizens and are taught valuable skills that will enable them to participate actively in society. For example, pupils in key stage 2 may be members of the school council, an eco committee or be an RE ambassador. Pupils place high value on the roles and responsibilities they have in school. They explained, with pride, their roles and spoke confidently about the impact they had in school. Pupils were especially keen to explain that the RE ambassadors in Year 6 select the new ambassadors before they leave. They greatly value this responsibility.
- Promotion of pupils' emotional well-being and good mental health is a key feature of the school. School leaders are aware of the increasing number of pupils who have an

unmet emotional health need. Consequently, they have prioritised training for staff, and are building a positive well-being team, led by the special educational needs coordinator.

- The physical health of pupils is also central to the actions taken by school leaders. For example, part of the physical education and sports funding has been spent on activities to encourage the least active pupils to get more involved, as well as providing the extensive programme of sports and participation in the competitive games mentioned above. The pupils at Gee Cross have excelled in these events, very often winning the competitions. Funding has also been used to help pupils build their confidence and social skills through drama activities.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The behaviour of almost all pupils in lessons is excellent. Occasionally, a few pupils lose focus in some lessons. However, they do not disrupt the learning of others.
- Pupils say that there are no behaviour problems in school and any minor concern is very quickly dealt with by teachers. They say that the 'Green is Great' reward system really helps them 'to stay on track'. At the time of the inspection, pupils' conduct on the playground, in the dining halls and on corridors was exemplary.
- Parents, pupils and staff all agree that bullying is not an issue in school. Everyone agrees that pupils are happy and safe in school.
- Overall attendance for the last few years has been above the national average. A small number of pupils are persistently absent. School leaders have detailed and rigorous systems to monitor attendance. Consequently, they know who these pupils are and take action to support families to improve their child's attendance.
- Punctuality is also monitored, as a small number of pupils are often late. This is not a whole-school issue but a concern in one or two year groups. School leaders are taking appropriate action to address this.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are now good overall. Pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points in both key stages 1 and 2. Some are exceeding the progress expected of them.
- Teachers take rapid action when pupils are not on track to reach their targets. Identified pupils have individually tailored interventions delivered in class to make sure that they catch up.
- A small number of pupils have SEN and/or disabilities. This group is well supported by the special educational needs coordinator and its pupils make good progress from their starting points. Some pupils who have SEN make rapid progress.
- Scrutiny of workbooks, observation of lessons and discussions with pupils show that progress has accelerated. There has been a two-year upward trend in the percentage of pupils making above average progress, and in the number of pupils reaching the

expected levels in all key stages. Pupils' workbooks provide strong evidence that higher attaining pupils in most year groups are working at greater depth in English and mathematics.

- Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are consistently good for all groups of pupils. In reading, writing, mathematics and science the percentage of pupils reaching age-related expectations was greater than the national average. In reading, the percentage of pupils working at a higher standard was also above the national figure.
- In 2017, the outcomes for Year 1 pupils in phonics were well above the national average. This was an improvement on 2016 when the percentage of pupils was slightly below the national average. By the end of Year 2 in 2017, almost all pupils reached the expected standard in phonics. Excellent teaching of phonics is resulting in very good outcomes for pupils. Pupils in key stage 1 demonstrated their ability to decode words using their phonic skills.
- The progress and attainment of pupils in key stage 2 are not as consistent as the outcomes in key stage 1 as a consequence of weaker teaching in the past. Teachers are currently highly successful in speeding up pupils' learning and making sure that they achieve well.
- In 2017, the percentage of Year 6 pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was higher than the national average. It was also higher than the national average for those pupils working at greater depth. Pupils performed very well on the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests, reaching above average scores. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading was far lower than in mathematics, and for boys was below the national average. Leaders are taking decisive action to improve boys' understanding and ability to infer from the texts they are reading.
- Pupils are very positive about the progress they are making. A key stage 1 pupil, on their way back to class after reading to the inspector, was heard to say, 'That was awesome reading.' One key stage 2 pupil said, 'I know I'm getting so much better at reading.'

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The teacher in charge of the early years has revitalised the provision. Working with an external consultant, no stone has been left unturned in reviewing the early years, in identifying where improvements were needed and then determinedly getting on with it. As a result, the early years provision is now a strength of the school.
- Transition arrangements for children joining and moving on from the early years are good. Before the children join the school, the early years teacher makes a visit to their home or nursery. This is followed up with a welcome meeting for parents, and 'settling in' days for children at which parents are welcome to stay. This ensures that in September, most children join the school happy and ready to learn.
- The very close links with the Year 1 class and teacher ensure that there is a seamless transition into key stage 1. During the autumn term, the teacher of Year 1 follows the model of continuous provision offered throughout Nursery and Reception.
- Detailed assessment systems are in place to track the progress of children. Regular

moderation with other schools and local authority representatives shows that assessments are accurate.

- The majority of children join the early years with skills and understanding below those typical for children of their age. From their low starting points, they make rapid progress. This is due to the good teaching provided by all adults. The proportion of children reaching the expected standards by the end of the Reception Year has been above the national figure for the last two years. A number of children start school able to do things typical for their age. Some of these children do not make as much progress as others because the activities provided for them are not sufficiently challenging.
- The indoor and outdoor environments are well planned and resourced. They are interesting, exciting and full of challenges for the children to 'have a go at'. There are many opportunities for mark-making in both areas. This is having a positive impact on the children's development of handwriting skills, currently a whole-school focus.
- The work in children's books provides strong evidence of their progress. For example, writing books showed that children using letter approximations at the start of the autumn term can now write well-formed letters. Some children were using their knowledge of phonics to write highly legible sentences. Others demonstrated their developing knowledge of letter sounds through reading or comments. During a phonics session, one child said, 'I have used a question mark.' Another child, while reading the sentence 'I put on the hat' said, 'I can write chewing gum with a curly c and that letter,' pointing to h, 'and it has a full stop.'
- The interactions between staff and children are highly effective. Adults use effective questioning to extend the children's learning. They move effortlessly and expertly between child-led and adult-directed activities. This results in children staying focused on their activities.
- Children's high levels of confidence, cooperation and independence were evident during the inspection. The atmosphere was calm and purposeful and children went about the business of play in a very orderly manner. Behaviour was excellent.
- Communication with parents is very good. Each week, parents receive a newsletter posted on the school website. On a regular cycle, each child is a VIP for a week. This includes detailed observations of the child's learning in all areas. A summary is written and sent home to provide parents with an update. Parents are encouraged to contribute to this summary.
- The children are safe at all times. All equipment is safely stored. Access to the early years area is secure.

## School details

Unique reference number	106226
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10036763

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Hall
Headteacher	Sue Lane
Telephone number	0161 368 2911
Website	<a href="http://www.geecross.tameside.sch.uk">www.geecross.tameside.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@geecross.tameside.sch.uk">head@geecross.tameside.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	10–11 November 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Gee Cross Holy Trinity CofE (VC) Primary School is a smaller than average-sized school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average. English is the first language of almost all pupils.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment or progress by the end of key stage 2.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well below average. No pupils have an education, health and care plan.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed lessons in all year groups.
- Accompanied by the English and mathematics subject leaders, inspectors reviewed pupils' workbooks to evaluate the progress and current achievement of pupils. Inspectors also looked at pupils' workbooks during lesson observations.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 and talked to them about their reading.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in and around school, on the playgrounds and in the dining hall. Inspectors also reviewed information and logs of attendance, behaviour, bullying and exclusions.
- Inspectors held a meeting with nine parents. Inspectors also took account of the 30 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and text responses from parents.
- Outcomes from eight staff and five pupil questionnaires were considered.
- Discussions were held with pupils informally, and in a planned meeting of 6 pupils from Year 5 and Year 6.
- Inspectors completed a learning walk jointly with a senior leader.
- Inspectors held meetings with governors, a representative from the local authority, the diocesan school improvement partner and school staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils were examined, including mandatory checks regarding the recruitment of staff.
- Inspectors reviewed and discussed with the headteacher, school documentation relating to the management of teachers' performance, monitoring of teaching and minutes of the governing body meetings.
- Inspectors examined the school improvement plan and self-evaluation document.
- Inspectors examined and discussed with the deputy headteacher information on pupils' attainment and progress.

## Inspection team

Liz Loftus, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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