

# Graham James Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114796
<b>Local Authority</b>	Thurrock
<b>Inspection number</b>	357618
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wendy Ratcliff HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Bradley Lane
<b>Headteacher</b>	Petra Back
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 May 2008
<b>School address</b>	The Sorrells Stanford-le-Hope SS17 7ES
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<b>Email address</b>	admin@grahamjamesprimary.thurrock.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed 13 part lessons taught by 9 different teachers. They met with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books, tracking data on pupils' attainment and progress, the school's development plan, examples of monitoring, minutes of the governing body's meetings and a range of policies. The team received 109 questionnaires from pupils, 70 questionnaires from parents and carers and 19 questionnaires from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What impact have recent strategies had on improving teaching and learning in mathematics?
- How effective has leadership at all levels been in raising standards and the quality of teaching through monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning?
- How effective have peer- and self-assessment strategies been in helping pupils understand how well they are doing in their learning and what they need to do next?

## Information about the school

Graham James is slightly smaller than the average sized primary school. The school serves a well-established community. A very large majority of the pupils are White British, and there are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to most schools. There are fewer pupils than average who are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award and the Activemark, and has been designated as a centre of excellence by the National Association of Professional Teaching Assistants (NAPTA).

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Graham James Primary School is an improving school, which provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils and has many good features. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher work effectively with the middle managers. Together with the members of the governing body, they are clear where the school needs to improve further. The strategies they have put into place since the last inspection are having a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. However, the school recognises these strategies need to be embedded even further in order to continue to help pupils do as well as they can. There is a whole-school commitment to improvement and, as a result, the school has a good capacity to build on its success and improve further. The school is an attractive and inclusive learning environment where pupils feel safe and well cared for. Consequently, pupils behave well and care for each other. Younger pupils commented how they were missing the older pupils in the playground when they were away on a school trip. They say that the older pupils are caring and ensure they have a friend to play with. Pupils enjoy being at school and are motivated to learn. They are proud of their school and take their responsibilities very seriously, for example, by being a prefect, part of the school council or a playground buddy. Pupils are gaining a good understanding of what constitutes an unsafe situation, for example, they show a secure understanding of internet safety.

Attainment in English and mathematics has been broadly average over the last three years, with mathematics being the weaker subject. School data show an improving picture for the current Year 6. Children start school broadly in line with national expectations. They settle well into Reception and make good progress in their learning. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress overall, with no groups underachieving. The school is carefully tracking the progress that pupils make and providing additional support that is targeted well for those who are identified as not making the progress expected. This is helping them to catch up and, as a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are now making satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory, with much that is good. A common feature of teaching across the school is the focus on meeting individual needs. In the best lessons, pupils are motivated and eager to learn. A range of teaching strategies is used to meet the varying needs within the classroom. Teachers' good questioning along with work that is closely matched to individual needs ensures that all pupils are challenged to succeed. This good practice is not yet consistent throughout the school. Pupils are informed about their progress through marking and discussion with adults. Teachers recognise that more needs to be done to involve pupils in assessing their own work so that they can take a greater responsibility for their own learning and what they need to do next.

The school has a generally positive relationship with parents and carers and provides them with some opportunities to involve them in their children's education. One parent said, 'I

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feel I have a very close relationship with the school and this is due to the very high standards set by all the staff.' Not all parents and carers agree and say they would like more opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. The school is highly committed to working in partnership with others to promote pupils' learning and well-being. It is an active member of the local sports partnership and regularly takes part in music activities. Effectively safeguarding pupils is of paramount importance to the school. The school works well with key agencies to ensure that the needs of the potentially vulnerable pupils are met effectively. A positive approach to community cohesion ensures good links within the local community. Pupils participate in carol singing and visit a local home for the elderly to deliver food collected through harvest festivals. The school has gained the International Schools Award as a result of links with a French school, but this link has not been maintained. The school is providing pupils with some opportunities to embrace different cultures and diversities through the curriculum. However, there is limited evidence of its success in promoting community cohesion beyond the school.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Improve levels of attainment and progress for pupils across the school by:
  - ensuring the quality of teaching is consistently good or better
  - helping pupils develop the skills of self-assessment through regular opportunities to evaluate their work and know what they need to do next.
- Further develop the opportunities for pupils to embrace diversity and different cultures beyond the school and local community.
- Provide more opportunities for parents and carers to engage fully in their children's learning.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>3</b>
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The school has a very caring atmosphere in which pupils feel valued. Levels of attendance are above average. Pupils' moral and social development is good and they learn to behave considerately towards one another. One pupil commented, 'I think it is very good that at this school we are very caring and look out for each other.' Daily assemblies provide pupils with good opportunities for reflection. Pupils have a good understanding and respect of different people's feelings as they consider the concept of 'walking in someone else's shoes'. Pupils have some opportunities to learn about other cultures through topics such as Mexican art and Chinese New Year. The pupils are proud of their school. They were keen to share how they are able to convey their views. For example, the school council took forward the views of their peers regarding lunchtime arrangements. As a result, a new 'coloured band' system has been introduced to ensure all pupils receive the meal of their choice even if they are last in the queue. Pupils have a good appreciation of how to keep themselves healthy through a healthy diet and regular exercise. Pupils say they enjoy taking part in sporting events and representing their school. They say they feel safe. This is confirmed by responses to the pupils' and parental questionnaires. Pupils say their teachers are quick to deal with any inappropriate behaviour.

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The school has focused on raising the level of attainment in mathematics and boys' writing. Overall, pupils' progress is now satisfactory and attainment is broadly average for English and mathematics. In most lessons, pupils are attentive and keen to learn. They respond well to the adults' challenging questions and high expectations, as seen in a Year 1 phonics lesson. Where lessons are planned well, they engage all pupils and in these lessons pupils make good progress. However, this good practice is not seen consistently in all classes. Small group intervention programmes ensure that those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those identified as needing additional support are catching up and making satisfactory or better progress. Pupils apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills to sound effect. This, along with their strong personal skills, is preparing them satisfactorily for their future learning.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

The recently reviewed curriculum is being embedded well. It is enriched by moving to a more integrated approach in order to develop pupils' personal and learning skills. It provides a broad range of experiences and links different areas of the curriculum well. For example, pupils in Year 5 make links across science, design and technology and literacy as they explore and write about rivers and volcanoes. There are many enrichment

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opportunities, such as an annual outdoor pursuits residential trip for pupils in Year 5, day trips and the school's partnership working with the three neighbouring schools.

Resources are used well to stimulate learning, including the effective use of the ICT suite and interactive whiteboards. Pupils use their computer skills well, for example, as an extension to their mathematics lesson by carrying out research for the costing of an end-of-term party. In the best lessons, learning proceeds at a good pace and planning is informed by accurate prior assessment of pupils' attainment. Pupils are provided with some opportunities to be involved in the marking of their work and are able to refer to their group targets, which are clearly displayed. However, pupils are not sufficiently well informed of what they need to do next to improve their learning further.

The school ensures that the care, guidance and support it provides are effective. Pupils demonstrate confidence and ease in taking part in activities because they have strong relationships with adults who know them well. Transition arrangements are carefully planned, so pupils settle quickly in their new classes. The school has established good links with other agencies in order to provide well-targeted support for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. For example, they make referrals to Barnardos in order to provide additional emotional support for pupils.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership team is successfully inspiring and motivating the school community to overcome previous weakness and ensure that the school continues to improve. It has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses as a result of monitoring systems that are becoming securely embedded and effectively bringing about improvement. For example, a regular cycle of monitoring in lessons has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching despite this not yet being consistently good. The senior leaders are moderating teachers' assessments so that the school is more accurately tracking pupils' achievement. As a result, pupils at risk of underachieving receive good individual or group intervention, which is having a positive impact on their progress. Such interventions are ensuring the school is promoting equality of opportunity and helping pupils catch up. The governing body is supportive and provides a good level of challenge. Governors are fully aware of the school's areas of development and are actively involved in setting priorities and monitoring how well the school is addressing these. The school provides parents and carers with regular information on school life through newsletters and open evenings. The school accepts that communication with some parents and carers, particularly in relation to providing information on children's learning, can be improved

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upon. This is an inclusive school, which has made strong links with the local community. The school is now focusing on developing links with other communities within Britain and around the world in order to provide pupils with a better understanding of other cultures and to further embrace diversity.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with national expectations, with knowledge and understanding of the world being a weaker area. Overall, children make good progress in all aspects of their learning. Their best achievement is in their personal, social and emotional development and their number skills. Carefully planned transition arrangements and effective engagement with parents and carers contribute to children settling quickly. Children respond with enjoyment to their learning environment and are enthusiastic learners. They are polite and courteous to visitors. They share resources and take turns fairly, playing together in harmony. Relationships with adults are positive and contribute very well to children's personal development and well-being. Children feel safe and secure and are confident to ask for help. There is a good balance of whole-class, group and child-initiated activities with a strong emphasis on learning letters and sounds and developing number skills. Children are helped to explore the world around them using all of their senses. They have healthy snacks and enjoy activities in the outdoor classroom, for example, as they carefully plant seeds with their friends.

Leadership is good and staff work well as a team. Staff are deployed well to support learning. They use assessment well to ensure they take full account of children's interests and needs. They make sensitive observations to identify children's starting points and use this information well to plan for the next steps in their learning. However, staff are not

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consistently providing sufficiently challenging tasks to stretch the more-able children. Planning is effective. Staff use a wide range of resources to enhance the learning environment and engage children in learning opportunities. Children recently enjoyed celebrations for the royal wedding by participating in their own pretend wedding.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Almost all of those who returned the questionnaire expressed satisfaction with most aspects of the school's work and the outcomes for pupils. However, a small minority expressed concern over areas such as behaviour, leadership and the extent to which the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. While the school accepts that it can improve communication, inspection evidence suggests that pupils behave very well and that leadership and management are good.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Graham James Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 208 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	41	37	53	4	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	43	30	43	5	7	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	23	35	50	14	20	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	33	27	39	17	24	3	4
The teaching is good at this school	17	24	27	39	18	26	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	26	33	47	15	21	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	33	28	40	12	17	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	21	27	39	8	11	3	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	26	28	40	15	21	3	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	21	19	27	22	31	7	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	24	19	27	19	27	6	9
The school is led and managed effectively	12	17	23	33	23	33	7	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	30	26	37	19	27	2	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



26 May 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Graham James Primary School, Stanford-le-Hope, SS17 7ES**

This letter is to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school and to tell you what we found. You made us feel so welcome. We especially enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and attending your assemblies. We were particularly impressed with your good behaviour and how you care for each other.

Your school is an inviting and welcoming place to learn. You told us you enjoy school. We were not surprised having found out about some of the things your teachers plan for you. It was good to hear about the '100 days of school' celebration when you got together with three other schools to learn in exciting ways, such as the best way to build a marshmallow and spaghetti structure. The adults care for you and know you well. You told us you feel safe at school and that your teachers quickly deal with any inappropriate behaviour. We were impressed by your knowledge of internet safety. You are proud to take responsibility by becoming part of the school council or playground buddies.

Your school is a satisfactory school and most of you make satisfactory or better progress in your learning. There are lots of things it does well, but some things could be even better. We have asked the staff to make more of your lessons as good as the best and to help you understand what you need to do next in your learning in order to help you make even better progress. We also want the school leaders to think about how they can provide even more opportunities for your parents and carers to be involved in your learning so they too know how well you are doing. Finally, we have asked your teachers to provide you with more opportunities to embrace different cultures by building links with others beyond your school community.

You can help by continuing to work hard in your lessons. Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we came to your school.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ratcliff HMI

Her Majesty's Inspector

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