

Graham James Primary School

The Sorrells, Corringham, Stanford-le-Hope, SS17 7ES

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils’ progress in English and mathematics is improving rapidly. Over time, rates of progress have continued to rise so that currently all pupils in Year 6 are expected to do well in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Standards are improving rapidly in reading because of the way it is taught in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.
- The way subjects are taught is exciting, well planned and enables all groups of pupils, especially disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, to make good progress.
- Assessment of pupils’ work is good. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to continue to improve.
- Support staff who work with pupils in need of additional help are making a strong contribution to rising standards.
- Pupils’ behaviour is exemplary because of the active role they play in ensuring that behaviour around the school is exceptional and attitudes to learning in lessons are outstanding.
- The headteacher’s driving force underpins the school’s rapid improvement in the last three years. Working with her deputy, a strong team of teachers and other staff, she has ensured that standards in English and mathematics continue to improve.
- The governing body holds the school to account for its performance and its management of finances, including additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Less able pupils are not doing quite as well as other groups.
- Teachers are not encouraging pupils to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, eight of which were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to other lessons, looked at pupils' work and heard them read.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils and governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as informal interviews with parents and carers and questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's improvement planning and the information it keeps on pupils' current progress. The team also looked at documentation relating to the staff's performance management and safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Justina Ilochi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ruth Frith

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- There is an Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and the children of service families) is below average.
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action and school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, are broadly average. Half of the pupils with special education needs have speech, language and communication needs and three quarters are boys.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and with English as an additional language are below average.
- The school has been awarded the National Healthy School Status and the International Schools award.
- The school works in close collaboration in a 'cluster' arrangement with one primary school, one junior school, one infant school and a secondary academy within its community.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school does not have alternative provision for its pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rates of progress for less able pupils so that they exceed those nationally expected by:
 - making sure that teachers plan activities that are well matched to their prior attainment
 - ensuring that school leaders monitor the progress that less able pupils make against high but realistic targets.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills by ensuring that teachers take advantage of opportunities for pupils to write more frequently in a range of contexts across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children in Reception make good progress from their low starting points and develop the skills expected for their age.
- Standards in English and mathematics are improving. Although pupils in Year 6 in 2012 attained results that were below average, the steady upward trend shown in pupils' work and assessment data means that standards are now broadly average in both Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards are improving particularly well in reading. The results of the tests in phonics (the sounds that letters make) for six-year olds demonstrate pupils' above average reading skills. Standards in writing are below those in reading but are also improving.
- Pupils' progress throughout the school has improved rapidly since the last inspection. All pupils in Year 6, including boys and girls, are in line to make or exceed nationally expected rates of progress in English and mathematics. The progress of less able pupils is not as rapid as that of other groups.
- The upward trajectory in mathematics has been maintained over the last three years. School records show that the progress of more-able pupils has accelerated rapidly towards the highest levels in Year 6 because of the school's collaboration with the secondary academy within its 'cluster' community.
- There is an improving picture of progress for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, many of whom have reached broadly average standards in the last year. For example, three quarters of the pupils with speech, language and communication needs made good progress in their reading because of the focus on training staff to give support to the development of reading skills.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding are making better progress and attaining standards in mathematics and English comparable with other pupils in the school. This is because funding has been properly spent on ensuring that work is set at the right level for them, with additional one-to-one and small group guidance where necessary.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good, with some examples of outstanding practice. A minority of lessons require improvement. The school has worked successfully to eliminate any inadequate teaching.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Expectations of what children in Reception can do are very high and as a result they achieve well.
- Teachers generally have high expectations and provide activities that stimulate and motivate pupils. Lessons typically have pace and variety. As a result, most pupils enjoy school and feel they are taught well. This is a view shared by the parents and carers that spoke to inspectors.
- In the best lessons teachers listen to and skilfully question pupils to check how well they are doing. Adults who assist pupils in need of additional help, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are making a strong contribution to rising standards

because their work is rigorously planned and they are well led and trained.

- Teachers use information they obtain from testing their pupils to help them to prepare activities which match the abilities of most pupils in their class, particularly in mathematics, where more-able pupils are regularly given harder work at the earliest opportunity. In some lessons the work given to less able pupils was insufficiently demanding.
- Marking is of a high quality and pupils are provided with individual guidance on how to improve their work on a regular basis. Pupils are actively involved in the marking of their own work, making it easier for teachers to spot mistakes and help them.
- The teaching of reading is good at Key Stage 1. Phonic knowledge is taught particularly well in Reception and Key Stage 1 so pupils make good progress from their lower skill levels in reading when they join the school. Successful strategies to raise achievement in reading include the use of 'boy-friendly' texts, which has helped to reduce the gaps in the achievement of boys and girls.
- The teaching of writing has improved over the last three years. Teachers and other adults make sure that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn. For example, in an outstanding English lesson in Year 3, pupils expertly assessed their own and each other's punctuation marks against the aims of the lesson, accurately judging for themselves how well they had progressed. However, opportunities are missed for pupils to extend these skills across the curriculum.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Scrutiny of the mathematics books of more able Year 6 pupils showed that the standard of their work was above average due to the opportunities offered for pupils to consolidate their problem-solving skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils enjoy school. The school encourages high attendance through strategies such as the publication of attendance figures by year group on the school's website, for example. As a result, attendance has been above average for the last three years.
 - Procedures to manage behaviour are used consistently by all adults. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour, including bullying, are infrequent. Pupils say that when bullying does occur it is dealt with extremely swiftly by the school.
 - Assemblies are used exceptionally well by the school to encourage pupils' reflection on spiritual and moral issues. For example 'buddy' assemblies led and run by pupils in Year 6 give pupils a sense of responsibility and self discipline. Consequently, young pupils are led extremely well by older pupils, whose leadership skills are honed in the process.
 - Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptional in all lessons and play a significant part in their good achievement. They are keen to answer questions and share their knowledge and understanding with others.
 - Pupils have outstanding social skills. They are confident speakers when conversing with adults and other pupils. They get on well together both inside and outside the classroom and their respect for each other and adults contributes to their good learning.
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- Pupils say they feel safe in the school. This is confirmed by responses to the pupil, staff and parental questionnaires. They take responsibility for their own and others' safety. They know right from wrong and often correct each other. They are fully aware of all forms of bullying, including e-bullying. In Year 5 pupils do an online test on their understanding of e-safety.

The leadership and management are good

- Ambitious leadership is shown in the relentless pursuit of consistently good or better teaching quality and improved progress for pupils. Central to this improvement is the accuracy of the school's view of its own strengths and weaknesses, the increased focus on pupils' achievement and the high quality training for staff. Monitoring is regular and thorough but needs stronger analysis to identify underperformance of particular groups.
- The headteacher's high expectations for improving the school are communicated well to the leaders in charge of subject areas, who are trained to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in their areas of responsibility. They are developing strong leadership skills under the capable leadership of the headteacher and her deputy.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and this has led to good progress for pupils at the end of Reception class.
- The performance management of staff is rigorous and appropriately linked to checks on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making. Consequently, the quality of teaching is improving rapidly. The staff have benefited from training by an external literacy consultant who has shown them how to adopt best practice in the teaching of phonics and guided reading in their own classrooms.
- The training of teachers is sharply focused on identified areas for improvement in the schools' action plans. Teachers benefit from training opportunities provided through their 'cluster' schools, with clear gains from the exchange of expertise in aspects such as quality of marking and accuracy of assessments.
- There are countless opportunities for pupils across the school to participate in activities that promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The themed curriculum is particularly strong in helping pupils learn about a range of cultures and faiths. There is a strong emphasis on spirituality which is evident in all aspects of school life.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and well supported by a good range of after school clubs which are well attended and adds to the enjoyment of pupils.
- The school engages well with parents and carers and responds to their requests. In the last year, following the demand from parents, the school increased the number of times parents can come into the school and discuss their children's progress from one to three times a year.
- Pupils' safety is very important and safeguarding procedures are followed meticulously.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to improve pupils' learning. In the last year, the school has used this funding for relevant staff training and to fund one-to-one and small group lessons and these have had a direct impact on the achievement of this group.

- The local authority maintains a 'light touch' link with the school, which includes encouragement for collaboration with 'cluster' schools within its community.

■ **The governance of the school:**

The work of the governing body has contributed to the good quality of education the school provides. Governors are knowledgeable, experienced and well trained. They carry out their statutory responsibilities through effective committees and keep records well. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and hold leaders to account for pupils' progress. For example, the governing body has kept a close check on school finances and the differences made by new initiatives including the pupil premium. Members of the governing body join senior leaders when they visit lessons and check the quality of pupils' work. Governors are clear about how the school's self-evaluation, the action plans that follow and the management of the performance of staff linked to teachers' pay. They have ensured that staff are aware of this by approving and publishing a clear policy on this issue. They are clear about how well pupils are doing when compared to pupils from other schools and they also know that pupils are making good progress.

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	114796
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	405538

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bradley Lane
Headteacher	Petra Back
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2011
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