

Inspection of a good school: Graham James Primary Academy

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

Inspection dates:

28–29 November 2019

Outcome

Graham James Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love attending Graham James Primary Academy. Pupils feel happy and safe in school.

Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Staff have created a culture where pupils confidently try again when they have made mistakes. Pupils are keen to explore new ideas and enjoy their learning. Teachers prompt pupils to think deeply about what they know and what they need to know. This enables them to share their views confidently.

Pupils' behaviour is positive in lessons and around school. Pupils know the difference between what is right and wrong. Pupils show respect to each other and their teachers. They enjoy good relationships with staff. There is a strong sense of community within the school and working together is important to all. Bullying is rare. When it does occur, it is dealt with quickly by teachers.

Parents speak highly of staff. A number of parents stated how their child has come on 'in leaps and bounds' since joining the school. Pupils benefit from wide-ranging provision for personal development which is responsive to pupils' needs. For example, pupils and parents appreciate the focus on supporting mental health through activities such as the school's 'mental health day'.

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

In early years children make an excellent start to their education. Nursery children, including two-year-olds, quickly gain the skills they need to learn to read. The focus on talking and listening helps children enjoy stories read to them. Children entering the school with little speech are well supported through conversation and role-play. Teachers skilfully use the school's chosen phonics programmes. Their subject knowledge about developing early reading skills means that many children become confident early readers by the end of Reception.

Leaders believe in their mantra 'no reader left behind'. They ensure that struggling readers are well supported. Many such pupils catch up rapidly and enjoy reading as a hobby. Older pupils are equally enthusiastic about reading, whether talking about authors they admire or the books they have read. Pupils use a range of techniques, such as skimming and scanning, to understand what they read. Parents appreciate the workshops on reading and the helpful communication through pupils' reading records.

As pupils progress through the school they become adept at writing at length. They understand the importance of accuracy with spelling and punctuation. Pupils learn from their mistakes. They independently use different ways to remember how to spell tricky words. Pupils commented that it was helpful when teachers used examples of types of writing as a starting point for their writing. They said that it helps them express their ideas.

Mathematics is taught well. Teachers explain methods clearly and show pupils how to work out complex calculations. Teachers' careful planning introduces new knowledge that builds on what pupils have learned before. Leaders provide valuable training and support for staff. The focus on making mathematics fun means that pupils enjoy mathematics. Pupils say that they 'love mathematics especially when they have problems they have to work out together in class'.

Leaders and staff have worked on developing their chosen thematic approach across the curriculum. Their ambition is for pupils to gain a rich store of knowledge in all subjects. This is starting to make a difference in subjects such as history, where the knowledge and skills that pupils learn is clear. Pupils remember what they learned previously. For example, Year 6 pupils accurately recounted facts about the life and times of the ancient Egyptians which they studied last year. They could explain how their historical skills have developed from their current learning based on the First World War. While this is the case for most subjects, the modern foreign language (MFL) subject plan is less well structured. Pupils lack the opportunity to practise the language and vocabulary they have learned. Staff are not confident teaching MFL and their subject knowledge is not as secure.

Leaders provide pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with the right support. Teaching assistants know pupils well and the school uses specialists where needed. Pupils with SEND are able to access the learning and enjoy the same broad curriculum as their peers.

In lessons, pupils concentrate well and listen carefully. Learning is rarely interrupted. Pupils enjoy being at school and pupils' attendance has improved.

Leaders want pupils to appreciate diversity. There is a strong focus on ensuring that pupils understand life in modern Britain. To help this, leaders organise purposeful cultural trips and visiting speakers.

Leaders and governors are careful to ensure that teachers' workload is manageable. Teachers appreciate this and staff morale is high.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, governors and staff make safeguarding a priority. All understand their statutory duties and how to keep pupils safe. Everyone who works at the school has received up-to-date safeguarding training. All concerns are logged and monitored carefully. Leaders ensure that external agencies provide timely support to vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders are aware of the risks associated to the local community and ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils also know how to keep themselves safe online. They feel confident to share any worries or concerns with staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have made a good start to developing a well-sequenced and coherently planned curriculum which ensures that pupils learn well across a broad range of subjects. Leaders should embed their chosen thematic approach of delivery so that pupils know and remember more over time in all subjects.
- Leaders need to make sure that the planning of MFL is as good as the other subjects. In addition, leaders need to provide appropriate training for staff so they improve their subject knowledge and their confidence with the delivery of MFL throughout key stage 2.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, also called Graham James Primary Academy, to be good on 16–17 January 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

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

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

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

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139613
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10110316
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	465
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Bradley Lane
Headteacher	Petra Back
Website	www.grahamjamesacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school has provision for two-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, class teachers, pupils, the vice-chair of governors and a co-opted governor, and a representative from the local authority.
- Reading, mathematics, writing and history were considered as part of this inspection. These subjects formed part of a deep dive, which meant that in addition to observing these subjects being taught, I held discussions with senior and subject leaders to find out why they were being taught in the way they were. I visited lessons and held discussions with pupils with their books. I also met with class teachers. I visited a range of teaching sessions and listened to pupils read to their teachers. I also looked at the curricular planning for the other foundation subjects, including MFL. I spoke to staff and pupils about teachers' planning for MFL and delivery.
- I looked at a range of safeguarding documents, including behaviour logs. I checked the school's register of pre-employment checks and records of statutory training for staff. I spoke to a range of pupils and met with members of the governing body.

- I scrutinised attendance and admissions information to check that no gaming or off-rolling takes place.
- I spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered the 49 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also took account of the 34 pupil responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and the 40 staff questionnaire replies.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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