

# 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>	311709
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Ranger

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 on roll</b>	
School	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr B Lane
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs P Back
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	The Sorrells Stanford-le-Hope Essex SS17 7ES
<b>Telephone number</b>	01375 675889
<b>Fax number</b>	01375 674290

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average. Its pupils come mainly from the immediate area and it is often heavily oversubscribed. A much lower than average percentage of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is similar to most schools. Currently 7% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and virtually all of these pupils speak fluent English. When first admitted, children's academic skills are broadly in line with those expected nationally for four-year-olds. The headteacher joined the school in September 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school judges that its overall effectiveness is currently satisfactory. This is a realistic evaluation in the light of the older pupils' recent academic achievements, which have been satisfactory at best. The headteacher has worked rapidly and efficiently with the staff to improve pupils' progress this year. It is too early to confirm that this has been fully accomplished but there are 'green shoots' indicating success. At the same time, important stronger features in the school have been maintained well since its last inspection. These include how well the younger pupils achieve, the pupils' good personal development and the quality of pastoral care. The great popularity of the school with parents has continued, summarised by one who described its 'open, friendly approach and the strong feeling of family and community'.

Pupils make good progress in Reception and Key Stage 1 and reach above average standards by Year 2. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have reached broadly average standards in recent years, but have not always built systematically enough on their earlier achievements, especially in mathematics and writing. While most have made satisfactory progress, there has been some underachievement. Successful recent action to accelerate the progress of the older pupils means that it is now at least satisfactory and often good. Crucially important have been improvements to the curriculum and to the ways staff assess progress term by term. Links are being forged between subjects to make lessons more creative and interesting for pupils. Rigorous tracking systems are now being used to monitor progress. These enable teachers to tailor lessons increasingly precisely to the needs of individuals and to give extra help to any pupil in danger of slipping behind. Indications from the school's records of progress are that standards are rising, especially in mathematics. Teaching and learning are improving, especially in Years 3 to 6. Having been mostly satisfactory, they are now good. The impact of the better teaching is still to be fully reflected in standards, but lesson observations by staff and inspectors confirm better practice.

Pupils attend regularly, have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. The atmosphere for learning is pleasant and orderly. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives and increasingly put this into practice in physical activity and sensible food choices. They contribute well to their school, knowing that staff value their ideas and talents. Pupils and parents rightly value the personal care and support the school offers.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving rapidly. Staff are enthusiastic about recent initiatives and committed to further improvement. Teachers speak highly of recent training they have received. They say this has opened their eyes to how they can be more effective leaders of subjects and contribute to how the curriculum develops. They have gained an understanding of how to monitor and analyse pupils' standards and, most importantly, are beginning to use this information to plan future developments. This means that, in turn, staff increasingly give governors good quality information about the school. The exception to this is the absence of a clear enough overall evaluation of children's standards when they start Reception; this is now being established to help measure subsequent progress. The governors articulate the school's strengths and weaknesses well and carry out their role of 'critical friends' efficiently. They, and the headteacher, have a clear vision for the school and the skills to realise their plans. The entire team of staff and governors has achieved important improvements to the school's provision and is well placed to continue to do so.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children do well in Reception. Recent classes have reached standards above those expected nationally in all areas of learning. Activities are interesting and engage the children. There is a good combination of adult-led sessions and opportunities for the children to choose what they would like to do. This mostly works well, although a few children need additional encouragement to be able to work independently. The outside area is well resourced and good links are being forged between indoor and outdoor learning. However, the outdoor area is quite small and on an exposed part of the site. The lack of any covered space makes it difficult to use fully in bad weather. Staff work well together with this age group. They assess children's day-to-day progress in all areas of learning, for example to provide clear evidence of attainment by the end of the year. Less well developed is a similarly clear analysis of children's starting points, to provide the staff and governors with an initial benchmark from which to establish an individual's overall progress. This has rightly been recognised by the headteacher as a priority for action.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor the impact of the improved tracking arrangements to ensure that progress in Key Stage 2 accelerates, especially in mathematics and writing.
- Ensure that all lessons become consistently good at matching tasks to pupils' needs.
- Establish a secure view of children's attainment on admission, by which to judge their subsequent progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory and improving. Since the last inspection, pupils at the end of Year 2 have done consistently well in the national assessments of reading, writing and mathematics. A good proportion of them have reached the higher than expected Level 3. The current Year 2 continues this trend of good achievement. Recent standards in Year 6 have been broadly average, but not enough pupils have reached the levels that their earlier achievements indicated were possible. Analyses show that progress tended to dip in Years 3 and 4. Staff commented, 'We took our foot off the gas for a while.' But now the school is seeing the rewards of its efforts to improve. Better systems are in place for spotting any likely underachievement and dealing with it quickly. This is ensuring that progress is improving and is more even across Key Stage 2. Pupils currently in Year 6 are expected to reach higher standards in the national tests this year than last and, while standards remain broadly average, records indicate better progress this year towards their targets.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and get on well together. One commented that school is 'equally fun and work'. An Activemark award has recognised pupils' understanding of good health. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there is always someone they can turn to for help. While behaviour is generally good, a small number of pupils sometimes are not good listeners and

this is not always addressed in lessons by the staff. Staff deal with the very few incidents of reported bullying or racism quickly and skilfully. Pupils contribute well to the running of their school through their school council. Year 6 pupils act as 'playground buddies' and team captains and also run a tuck shop. Pupils make significant contributions to the wider community, such as links with the local hospice and care home, and they raise money for a number of charities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show good levels of tolerance and respect towards each other and regularly reflect on their own and others' feelings. They are prepared well for the next stage of their education by the good personal and social skills, which complement their sound academic achievements.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Although yet to have a full impact on standards, the most important development in the school's recent history has been the improvement of teaching and learning on a day-to-day basis, especially in Years 3 to 6. This has been achieved because a more interesting curriculum is being taught which engages pupils more effectively, enables them to see the relevance of links between subjects and has a sharper focus on practical activity in lessons. The improvements to pupil assessment and tracking, and how these feed into lesson planning, are making teaching and learning more effective. Tasks are being matched more closely to individual needs. Staff are also focusing on how effectively they mark pupils' books and give opportunities for pupils to be aware of how well they are doing. Most notable is the use of appropriate 'success criteria' to aid individuals in checking how much progress they have made in a lesson. The school acknowledges that these improvements are still 'work in progress' and is monitoring practice closely to ensure even better consistency across the school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The broad curriculum is enriched by a good number of clubs, activities, visitors and local visits. These experiences contribute particularly well to pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles and their musical and social development. Due emphasis is placed on the key areas of literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Strong links with other local schools have improved provision in a range of subjects including the creative arts and technology. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils now learn French. The programmes of personal, social and health education and citizenship make significant contributions to pupils' personal development and well-being. The further development of the curriculum to improve mathematics and writing skills across all subjects has been started well.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Very good levels of pastoral care and support enable pupils to feel safe and well looked after. Parents greatly appreciate the school's efforts to increase the enjoyment and well-being of pupils. Pupils who need extra help with key skills are identified early and appropriate support is provided. Close involvement with parents and external agencies provides positive support for particular pupils and their families. Child protection and other safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Good links with local secondary schools prepare Year 6 pupils well for their

transfer. Academic guidance for most pupils is satisfactory and improving fast. The better assessment arrangements are benefiting pupils. Teachers now have the information to give precise feedback to individuals. Current initiatives are rightly aimed at ironing out any inconsistencies in how far pupils are aware of their learning targets and what they need to do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher has quickly gained an in-depth knowledge of the school. Working closely with governors, she has compiled a clear agenda for further improvements to provision, which forms the basis of a concise, well-focused development plan. This is based on thorough and accurate self-evaluation, initially mainly steered by the headteacher but now becoming an integral part of the roles of all staff and of governors. Staff feel enthusiastic, informed and properly skilled to take a fuller role in how the school is led and managed. A typical example is the schedule for them to observe lessons more systematically. This is an improving school that shows great determination and a good capacity to achieve its ambitions.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 May 2008

Dear Children

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

Thank you for your welcome and help when Mr Manuel and I visited your school recently. As promised, I am writing to share with you what we found out about your school. We think that your school gives you a satisfactory education at present. There are many good things happening and some areas that can be improved.

The children in Reception and Years 1 and 2 do well. Children in Years 3 to 6 do not make quite such fast progress as the younger ones, but reach standards that are similar to those achieved by most 11-year-olds. Your teachers want to make sure that you do even better, especially in mathematics and writing. We think they are right. You can help yourselves with this by listening carefully to the advice the adults give you in these subjects. We saw you using your 'success criteria' to check how well you learn. This already seems to be helping in your numeracy work, so well done!

The teachers are improving the lessons they offer you. We have asked them to make sure that you are given work at just the right level for each of you. You told us that lessons are interesting and enjoyable. You really like practical activities and the ways that subjects are now being linked together. You also know how to behave well and get on with other people. You keep healthy, for example, through lots of sport and exercise. We were pleased to hear that you feel safe and well cared for in school.

The staff and governors are working well as a team to help you all. We have asked them to check carefully how well each of you is doing from when you start Reception to leaving Year 6 to make sure you all do as well as you can. Mrs Back is very clear about how she wants your school to develop. The staff have good plans for how they can check that the school keeps getting better and are keen to put the plans into action.

Thank you again for your help. Best wishes to all of you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Helen Ranger

Lead inspector