

# Graham James Primary Academy

The Sorrells Stanford-le-Hope Essex SS17 7ES

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Dear Parents

Please find attached a copy of the letter sent to us regarding our recent Ofsted. Our Inspector, Liz Smith, encouraged us to send out a letter to parents to elaborate on the report as the reports are quite straightforward and fairly basic. She suggested that we shared some of her feedback to Governors and Senior Staff to let you all know what fantastic feedback was given.

Firstly she explained that she was absolutely amazed at your children and their behaviour. She said she had seen enthusiasm, excitement, resilience and enjoyment; she described the children's behaviours and attitudes as 'impeccable'! She spoke to lots of the children throughout the course of the two days including hearing the younger children read and discussing books and reading with the older children. She also discussed what they had been learning across the curriculum.

The first day began with watching Phonics being taught and seeing how the children learn and progress. She began in the Nursery and went through Key Stage 1. After listening to readers and observing Key Stage 2 children both reading and writing, she spoke with the children and looked through their books for progress. Her feedback to the Governors was that our youngest children make an excellent start. She agreed with our judgements and that we are right to be incredibly proud of our Early Years. Her feedback regarding reading and writing was that these were a real strength of our School, were taught skilfully and that children make great progress.

The same process was carried out for Mathematics across the whole school, including speaking with children about their maths lessons. The feedback to Governors was, again, incredibly positive and concluded that maths was also a strength of our School, a subject enjoyed by the children and that they make great progress in this area too.

As we were 'Time Travelling' across the school and lots of learning of Historical periods, people and events was going on in classes, the inspector observed this subject in what is known as a 'Deep Dive'. She watched the learning, looked at the books and spoke with the children. She was impressed with their understanding of chronology and how the children were able to use the skills being taught and link and discuss different historical periods. We were pleased, again, to hear that History is strong at Graham James.

Throughout the inspection, emphasis was put on the learning and progress of all children and we were very pleased to hear that she had seen that the children at our school with Special Needs are given the same opportunities as their peers and made equally great progress across the curriculum. She noted that children were well supported in class and in interventions.

The inspector met with all the leaders at our school and with most of the staff across the two days and was impressed to see how much our staff care about the children, their families and the Academy. She also saw how robust our Safeguarding procedures were and the processes that are in place to support all families.



The inspector was very impressed with our 'ambitious curriculum' that goes 'above and beyond' and how well the children learn under the over-arching topic approach. She explained to Governors that we should definitely continue with this approach and continue to embed it which will put us even further along our path to outstanding. Alongside this we agreed that we wanted to raise the profile of Modern Foreign Languages for it to be as good as the other subjects. We are well on the way to achieving this and staff have already had training since the inspection.

We were really pleased to hear all the positive feedback from our inspector and it was fantastic to hear words like inspirational, innovative, impeccable, excellent and a family feel. Liz Smith told us that she had thoroughly enjoyed her two days with us and that we were doing a fabulous job and that we should carry on doing what we are doing.

The inspector told us about the wonderful feedback she had received from Parents that she had spoken to and those of you that made comments on the parent view. We are incredibly humbled to hear such positive comments and, indeed, very grateful to have such support from a great community around us. Your children are a credit to you and we feel really lucky to have a school full of such wonderful young people.

Finally, I wanted to say a huge thank you for your continued support of Graham James Primary Academy and that I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and New Year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P Back" followed by a small flourish.

Petra Back  
Head Teacher

# Inspection of a good school: Graham James Primary Academy

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

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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139613
<b>Local authority</b>	Thurrock
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110316
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	465
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Bradley Lane
<b>Headteacher</b>	Petra Back
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.grahamjamesacademy.co.uk">www.grahamjamesacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	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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