

John Gulson Primary School

George Street, Coventry, CV1 4HB

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is improving rapidly but not enough is consistently good or outstanding.
- Most pupils behave well and make good progress in literacy, communication and numeracy. However, the most-able learners are usually not given work that is suitably demanding to enable them to reach higher levels of attainment.
- Opportunities for pupils to question, invent, discover and work things out for themselves are too few.
- The school's successful approach in developing pupils' basic skills in literacy, communication and numeracy is not adopted widely in other subjects.
- Most pupils are experiencing a limited range of skills and approaches to learning.
- In planning for different subjects, not enough consideration is given to promoting pupils' enjoyment in learning through stimulating, creative and purposeful activities.

The school has the following strengths

- The leadership team and the governing body share a common purpose in putting pupils and their achievement first. Moving teaching to good in order to raise standards is their priority. They check the quality of teaching and how well pupils are learning rigorously to set high expectations for improvement.
- The school provides an extensive range of special programmes and packages for pupils most at risk of underachievement so that they make as much progress as others.
- For years, pupils' attendance has been too low. It is now average.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school’s view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of these services.
- Inspectors saw teaching in all parts of the school in 30 lessons, including some that were observed jointly with the headteacher or the deputy. Short visits were made to watch pupils learning in smaller groups. In addition, pupils were heard reading. Work in pupils’ books and on display was examined.
- The team looked at a range of documents including the school’s self-evaluation and plans for improvement, policies and records of pupils’ behaviour and attendance, and those relating to safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents and carers, staff, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account 17 responses to the online (Parent View) survey and a parent who shared their views by phone. They also considered comments from 17 staff who responded to Ofsted’s questionnaire.

Inspection team

Linda Killman, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Marian Driver	Additional Inspector
Stephen Palmer	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a very large school compared to other primary schools. Since the last inspection, the number of places available in each year group has risen from 75 to 90. The school roll is rising rapidly: extensive building work and refurbishment has been carried out to accommodate growing numbers.
- Nearly all pupils (98%) are from minority ethnic heritages: the very large majority speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils receiving additional support for their complex learning needs (school action plus), is slightly above average. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A few receive extra help to address minor learning difficulties (school action).
- Just over a third of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is above average. The school receives additional funding known as pupil premium for these pupils, based on the number of pupils in local authority care, from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- There is high pupil mobility as a large number of pupils join and leave the school throughout the year.
- The school meets the government floor standards which are the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage includes two part-time nursery sessions every day, and three Reception classes.
- One of the two deputy headteachers is supporting another local school temporarily.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that 80% is consistently good and some is outstanding by:
 - using more creative and inspiring approaches and methods that encourage pupils to question, invent, explore and discover things for themselves
 - adjusting learning quickly in lessons when pupils show that they have understood and are ready to move on to the next step
 - ensuring that learning for the most-able pupils is set at a greater level of difficulty to enable them to reach a higher level of attainment.
- Build on the school's initial work to develop an enriched, dynamic and cohesive curriculum that:
 - enables pupils to build their skills systematically across the full range of subjects
 - introduces pupils to a wider range of skills and approaches to learning
 - increases pupils' enjoyment in learning through stimulating, creative and purposeful activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- When children start in the Nursery, their stage of development is well below that usually expected for their age. Almost all children speak only their community language at home and start school with no experience of speaking English. They learn their new language quickly through activities that are fun supported expertly by staff, many of whom are bilingual.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage team plan children's next steps carefully to ensure that they make good progress. Children develop as happy, confident learners whose English 'gets better and better' according to many parents and carers. Attainment by the end of Reception has risen steadily since the last inspection and in 2012, for the first time, it was broadly average in most areas of learning.
- The emphasis on language development, literacy and numeracy continues through Key Stage 1 and ensures that pupils' basic skills develop well. In Years 1 and 2, pupils use their understanding of letters and the sounds they make skilfully to tackle unfamiliar words. As a Year 1 pupil explained 'I can read books that are hard and I can figure it all out by myself!' Nonetheless, pupils do not read avidly for pleasure and share books with an adult only occasionally.
- Attainment by the end of Year 2 has risen since 2010 and it is now broadly average. However, not enough pupils, in comparison to schools nationally, reach the above average range in reading, writing and mathematics because teaching is not consistent or ambitious enough.
- A similar picture emerges in Key Stage 2 where proportions of pupils making expected and better than expected progress compare favourably with national figures yet too few reach the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6. Teachers' expectations for the most-able learners are not high enough. This is why pupils' achievement across the full range of subjects is not yet good.
- The school invests heavily and wisely in staffing to ensure that pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support have access to extra help. They make better progress in English and mathematics than other pupils in the school and their attainment also matches that of the other pupils – there is no gap to close. The same applies to pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Pupils take pride in their written work which is usually presented neatly. By Year 4, most pupils' handwriting is well-formed and letters are joined enabling them to write quickly and effortlessly.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- While teaching is improving, it is not consistently good across the full range of subjects in some classes. Teaching of reading, writing, communication and mathematics is generally stronger than in other subjects. A small proportion of inadequate teaching was seen where pupils' capabilities were underestimated and their progress too slow.
- Where teaching was good, but not outstanding, learning was adjusted immediately when pupils showed that they had understood and were ready to move on. Expectations for pupils to work hard were high and a range of lively and interesting activities captured their interest. Even so, the most-able learners worked through the same steps as others when they were capable of striding ahead.

- A few teachers are experimenting with more daring teaching that makes learning enjoyable. A Year 2 class had great fun filling containers with water. They all developed skills of prediction and some realised that a litre of water is the same measure whether it is in a tall narrow litre cylinder or a wide one. A Year 4 class developed their questioning skills rapidly by interviewing the teacher who pretended to be baby bear in the Goldilocks story.
- Teaching assistants play a valuable part in promoting pupils' learning. They are quick to recognise when pupils are stuck and reshape tasks so that they are able to succeed. Most teaching assistants deliver special learning programmes adequately - but not adventurously - to boost pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Teachers know exactly the levels that pupils have reached in English and mathematics. They discuss pupils' progress at class conferences, with the deputy, and contribute to the collection of information about learning used by the school to track pupils' progress. Their understanding of standards and progression of skills across the full range of subjects is less well developed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils show great respect and good manners towards adults and each other. They have a good understanding of cultural and religious diversity; they work and play together harmoniously, free from any form of harassment. New arrivals in the school are welcomed and befriended quickly.
- Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. When adults issue a warning, they adjust their behaviour quickly.
- Serious incidents leading to exclusion are rare. The school keeps careful records of pupils' behaviour and pupils know that their parents or carers will be fully informed if poor behaviour persists. Most parents and carers feel that pupils' behaviour in school is good and that their children are safe and well cared for.
- Pupils are keen to take part in clubs and show pride in representing the school in sports and other activities. They accept responsibility readily and enjoy fund-raising activities which they organise themselves.
- In lessons, pupils are exceptionally good listeners and willing learners. They commented that they prefer it when the teacher sets 'challenging work'. Generally, pupils are inclined to be passive, lacking the confidence to question, show initiative and take decisions.
- The school ensures that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of different situations which they are able to explain. They recognise potential dangers and who to turn to if they should feel anxious or upset.
- Attendance, which was a prime area for improvement in the last inspection, has improved significantly. Parents and carers have been helped to understand that regular attendance leads to children's better achievement. Families' requests for extended leave are only granted in exceptional circumstances.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the deputy provide visionary and steadfast leadership. Their partnership, together with four newly-appointed assistant headteachers, provides an effective leadership

team. They are not daunted by any potential barriers to school improvement and are determined to move the school to good.

- Leadership is nurtured at all levels adding strength to the school's capacity to improve. Leaders gradually extend their responsibilities in preparation for promotion within or beyond the school. Subject leaders are developing their leadership skills steadily.
- Plans for improvement focus very strongly on improving outcomes for the pupils through quality teaching. They outline what is to be done and who is responsible for ensuring that each action takes place. Monitoring is thorough and is making a difference – the proportion of good teaching is rising and many pupils are making good progress.
- The senior leadership team ensures staff effectiveness by setting clear expectations for improvement within challenging yet realistic timescales. All staff have access to good-quality coaching, training and development with an explicit expectation that their practice will improve as a result.
- Leaders and managers do not shy away from tough decisions. For example, they will not recruit new teachers if the field of applicants is not strong enough. Only teachers whose performance is consistently good progress to the upper pay scales and/or promotion.
- Many aspects of the school have improved since the last inspection. For example, good leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage has led to better provision and children making a good start to their education. Parents and carers are working closely with the school and this has led to better rates of attendance. Recently 80 parents and carers attended a literacy and numeracy workshop explaining how their children are taught.
- The school draws readily upon expertise within the local authority and other external professional partners. The local authority supports the school adequately by endorsing leaders' accuracy in making judgements about where the school is and what its priorities for improvement should be. It is responsive but not sufficiently challenging. The local authority's literacy and numeracy consultants have advised staff on how to plan activities to extend the most-able pupils. However, this remains a barrier in moving the school to good. Training for governors and the clerking of their meetings are good. Exemplary advice and guidance from human resources (HR) have been instrumental in resolving some extremely difficult and sensitive staffing issues.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. The governing body knows the school strengths and weaknesses well. It shares the leadership team's ambitions and high expectations for consistently good-quality teaching to raise achievement.
 - The governing body fulfils its duty to evaluate the headteacher's performance annually and to set challenging future targets. It also understands fully the school's system for teachers' appraisal and how the headteacher is managing staff performance to move teaching to good.
 - Governors understand and can interpret the school's data so that they are in an informed position to ask searching questions about pupils' achievement and hold school leaders to account.
 - The governing body ensures that the budget is invested wisely. Pupils' learning needs come first but also teachers are provided with the resources they need to teach effectively. Pupils have access to good-quality resources to support their learning such as comfortable classroom spaces, access to information and communication technology and a well-stocked library.
 - All arrangements for securing pupils' safety and well-being are met diligently.

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	103690
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	404892

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	630
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Lines
Headteacher	Shaukat Hussain
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2011
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