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Mr Shaukat Hussain
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hussain

Short inspection of John Gulson Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2019 with Linda Brown, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in March 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the last inspection, you have successfully improved the teaching and learning of phonics across school. You are now developing the curriculum, so that pupils can further extend their skills in writing across different subjects. At the last inspection, leaders were also asked to increase challenge for pupils, particularly the most able. This is now being addressed.

You have taken action to raise standards across the school and, as a result, standards have risen. In the early years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check has increased and pupils' attainment has risen at key stage 1. Standards across key stage 2 are not so strong. You have now taken steps to address the weaknesses, but these are in their infancy and the intended impact is yet to be seen. You and other leaders know the school's weaknesses and strengths, but your evaluation of the school's strengths is over-generous.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's priorities. They hold leaders to account and are ambitious for the school. The governing body is knowledgeable and brings a wealth of expertise to the school. Governors are proactive, have formed positive links with school staff and are keen to see the work of the school for themselves.

The local authority provides effective support that is currently focused on raising standards across the school.

Most parents and carers who spoke to inspectors in the playground are positive about the school. Parents said how happy their children are and how well teachers support them. A number of parents who replied to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire, said that the way the school deals with behaviour is an area that could be improved. In their responses to the staff questionnaire, a few members of staff commented that they did not feel supported by leaders when a pupil's behaviour deteriorates in school. You were made aware of these concerns during the inspection.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection are proud of the school and their teachers. They said that any issues are dealt with quickly, and that they would have no hesitation in telling an adult if they were worried about anything. Playtimes are harmonious occasions, pupils are curious and polite, and routines are well embedded.

Provision in the early years has improved and a greater proportion of children reach a good level of development. The environment is stimulating, with a range of effective learning opportunities. There is a strong focus on developing children's early literacy and numeracy skills. Adults ask effective questions and promote children's speaking, listening and thinking skills, but pupils are not always encouraged to explain in greater detail and give extended responses.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors to the school to make sure that they are suitable people to work with children. The single central record of recruitment and vetting checks meets requirements. All staff and governors have regular training in child protection.

Pupils say that they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Your systems for monitoring and improving attendance are robust and systematic. Attendance has improved considerably since September because you are working effectively with families to reduce the number of absences.

Behaviour records show that a range of interventions are deployed when incidents are identified, including support for families and bespoke programmes to support pupils' self-esteem. Pupils learn about using the internet safely and how to avoid the potential dangers of social media sites.

Inspection findings

- This inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first was to assess the impact of leaders on improving standards, and how pupils who have

fallen behind in their learning are supported to catch up. You have taken steps to raise standards, such as implementing a systematic approach to improving reading, writing and mathematics. However, sustainable improvement has not been seen as yet.

- Strategies introduced to further develop pupils' reading are beginning to have an impact on pupils' learning but these need to be embedded and systematic. Pupils are not always able to demonstrate understanding of what they have read and are not challenged sufficiently to achieve the standards typical for their age.
- Opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their mastery of literacy and numeracy skills are limited. Books sampled during the inspection show that work is not always well matched to the needs of pupils, including the most able. This results in some pupils not achieving their potential and has an impact on overall outcomes at the end of key stage 2.
- Books show that some pupils are asked to repeat work in mathematics which they have shown they can already do. In addition, pupils who have fallen behind are not always supported to understand how to apply the taught skills to solve problems. When pupils are asked to explain their understanding, for example if an answer is correct, they are not always able to do so using appropriate mathematical language. Pupils do not have a secure enough understanding of key concepts.
- Your systems for monitoring pupils' progress over time are not as effective as they could be. This is because they do not enable you to check the progress of certain groups, such as the most able pupils, throughout the year. Leaders are aware of this limitation and are now looking to adopt a system which will monitor the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Last year, the local authority checked the school's assessments in the early years and key stage 1. The judgements the school made were upheld. During the inspection, leaders shared their current assessment information but this information did not always reflect the standard of the work in pupils' books. Pupils who have joined the school recently are being supported to catch up but these pupils' skills are not being developed quickly enough for them to access the curriculum expectations for their age. This is because the provision is not always effective and expectations are low.
- Another line of enquiry looked at the impact of leaders on raising standards for groups of pupils who have historically made less progress than other pupils over time. Your improvement plans acknowledge this as an area for development and a number of new initiatives are now in place. You have provided additional support for these groups, but because the work does not always match their needs, not all pupils are catching up to where they need to be. Too often, pupils who have fallen behind are given the same work to complete as other pupils who have a better understanding of what is being taught. The provision is not always effective.
- Observations in lessons and work in books show that pupils are not always given work that is challenging enough to develop, extend and refine their knowledge and understanding. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, which means that pupils are not being stretched or

challenged by their work.

- Leaders have identified the need to make sure that more pupils attain the higher standards of which they are capable. During an observation in Year 6, for example, pupils were reading 'The Hobbit' and developing their vocabulary, using words such as 'flummoxed'. Pupils discussed what it meant and why the author chose this word. In other lessons, however, pupils were introduced to new vocabulary but it was not sufficiently discussed and explained so that pupils could understand it and use it in different contexts.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to discuss and use new vocabulary including in their written work
- pupils develop a deeper understanding of what they read including through their use of higher-order reading skills
- pupils are able to apply mathematical skills and knowledge when solving and explaining mathematical problems and reasoning about their work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Coventry. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Khalid Din
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and other senior leaders. We spoke with parents and members of the governing body, including the chair. We also met a representative from the local authority. We spoke with pupils informally at playtime and met with a group of 12 pupils. We listened to pupils reading and we discussed the school's work. We observed teaching in all classes, and looked at pupils' work to consider the quality of learning over time. The school's safeguarding documents were reviewed, including the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks and attendance information. We discussed the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. We spoke with parents in the playground and there were five responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to consider. The staff questionnaire was also reviewed, and comments considered.