

John Gulson Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103690
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	308389
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Kessell

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 on roll	
School	577
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Bond
Headteacher	Shauket Hussain
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2004
School address	George Street Coventry CV1 4HB
Telephone number	024 76227791
Fax number	024 76258103

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

John Gulson is much larger than the average size primary school. The large majority of pupils come from Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Indian backgrounds. A number of other minority ethnic groups are represented at the school. The proportion of pupils who either leave or join the school other than at the normal times is high. Many of those joining are refugees and asylum seekers and do not speak English. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average as is the proportion identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. During the current academic year there has been a high level of staff absence especially amongst the senior leadership team.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

John Gulson provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is particularly effective at developing pupils' personal qualities. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school is a calm and safe place and behaviour is outstanding. Pupils think highly of their school. As one pupil said, 'I come here to learn but I am also amazed at all the things that go on,' whilst another noted, 'This lovely school has always looked after me.' The school is also popular with its parents who appreciate the caring way that their children are looked after. The school's positive and friendly atmosphere was summarised accurately by one parent who said, 'When I leave my children at school I know they are in good hands and well looked after.'

Pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory but standards remain low at the end of Year 6 especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage but progress is only satisfactory as they move up through the school and this is not enough to raise standards significantly. The quality of teaching is an important factor that affects the pupils' progress. Despite good classroom relationships and the pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning, lessons do not always move with sufficient pace to ensure good progress. Equally, teachers' expectations of their pupils are too often not high enough. Information collected on individual pupils by the school about their progress and attainment is not well organised and has yet to be used effectively by teachers when planning lessons and activities. Pupils' punctuality is improving but attendance is below average. This has a negative influence on the progress of the small minority of pupils who do not come to school regularly and those Asian heritage pupils who take extended holidays.

The school's satisfactory curriculum contributes soundly to pupils' academic development and well to their personal development. For example, they know how to keep fit and healthy through regular 'wake and shake' sessions and, as one pupil acknowledged, through, 'the lots of extra sporting clubs we are provided with'. Pupils are extremely respectful of different cultures and religions. The school is racially harmonious and this underpins the exemplary standards of behaviour. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Strengths are evident in the good attention paid to pupils' personal welfare. The school works well with a range of agencies and community groups to promote pupils' well-being and pupils who are new to the school settle in very quickly. Academic guidance, such as advice to pupils on how to improve their work, makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent absences in the leadership team have led to disruption in the school's monitoring and evaluation activities. There has not been sufficient focus on driving up standards and improving the quality of provision, particularly teaching and learning. The school has been through a period of maintaining the current satisfactory quality of education rather than being proactive about making significant improvements. Nevertheless, the headteacher, staff and governors are committed to improvement as demonstrated by the recent successful drive to improve punctuality and restructuring of the school's management team. They have a satisfactory capacity to take the school forward.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school makes good provision for children in the Foundation Stage. The good leadership and management result in the provision running smoothly with a sharp focus on children

achieving well and enjoying school. When children enter the Nursery their attainment is very low. Communication, language, literacy and personal and social skills are poorly developed. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress by the end of the Reception year although their levels of attainment are still well below average. Regular detailed assessments provide accurate measures of strengths and weaknesses and teachers use these effectively to plan activities at the right level. The curriculum is well planned and provides a range of experiences to promote emotional, physical, social and intellectual development. It ensures children have a good balance of work to improve their academic skills, learn to take care of themselves and develop their independence. The focus on communication, language and literacy benefits all children particularly those new to learning English. Adults work well as a team to provide good care, support and guidance to ensure children's safety and well-being. Children learn in a spacious and stimulating environment with outside learning areas and equipment, role play areas and an extensive range of free play activities. The rooms are stimulating and display evidence of the learning the children have accomplished. Facilities for outdoor play are good but, as is recognised by the school, could be developed further to make the areas useable in all weathers. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure children progress into Year 1 with the minimum of worry or concern.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Raise teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve and improve pupils' learning by quickening the pace of lessons.
- Better organise the information collected on pupils' progress and attainment and ensure this information is used more effectively to plan lessons and activities.
- Ensure that the school's monitoring and evaluation activities have an impact on improving pupils' achievement and the quality of provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the time pupils leave school in Year 6, standards are exceptionally low but pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their starting points on entry. Year group characteristics vary year-on-year quite significantly because of the high pupil mobility at the school, particularly in Key Stage 2. Consequently, standards can also vary. Pupils who take extended holidays during term time and those with poor attendance have interrupted learning and this results in them making more limited progress than their classmates and hampers their overall achievement. Conversely, pupils who join the school from other countries either, at the early stages of learning English or with no English, often make good progress. This is because they receive effective support to help them develop confident communication skills. Standards are well below average in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall although a small minority make good progress especially in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress at a sound rate, similar to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils get on well with each other and with the adults in school. Visitors cannot fail to be impressed by the very high standards of behaviour and the warm greetings they are offered. Pupils have a strong sense

of respect for different cultures, religions and customs. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community, taking on responsibilities and raising funds for charities. Pupils have a good understanding of the needs of others for example working as 'Playground Pals' or as 'Escorters' for the younger children. School council members take great pride in their role in improving the school, for example devising a traffic light system in the dining hall to identify healthy and less healthy foods. Pupils know a lot about how to keep fit and healthy. They are keen to eat healthily and enthusiastically participate in sporting activities at lunchtimes and after school. Pupils move sensibly and safely around the school. They successfully adopt safe practices, for example maturely explaining the importance of road safety. Pupils work well together through activities such as 'talk partners'. Although their personal qualities are developed well, their preparation for the next stage of education and their future lives is adequate because their progress in developing basic skills is only satisfactory. Those pupils who attend regularly, enjoy school and all that it has to offer. This is reflected in their enthusiasm for everything. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance levels are below average, largely because of extended holidays in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory but this is not good enough to increase pupils' progress and raise standards. Teachers explain carefully to pupils the purpose of each lesson so that pupils know what they are trying to achieve. In many lessons, pupils are given good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills through discussion in pairs and whole class question and answer sessions. Interactive whiteboards are used well by the teachers to support their teaching. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and eager to please. Unfortunately, this enthusiasm is not always fully exploited by teachers particularly when pupils participate in independent activities. The pace of learning is often too slow and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils are capable of. Although activities are varied for different ability groups, they are not always planned at a level that is right for all. At other times, not enough is demanded of pupils. This affects all ability groups but particularly higher attaining pupils. A number of pupils told inspectors that they often found their work too easy. Information collected by teachers about pupils' progress and attainment is not used rigorously enough to plan lessons or activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs of the school's many ethnic groups and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It contributes well to the pupils' personal development and well-being. Sporting activities help to keep them fit whilst the school's effective programme for personal, social and health education helps pupils to consider their lifestyles, improves their safety awareness and develops self-esteem. Consequently, pupils are mature and sensible, especially when talking about important issues such as bullying. Equally, other activities such as visits out and visitors into school make the curriculum enjoyable, exciting and interesting for the pupils. The school has correctly identified the need to improve the pupils' basic skills; however, writing and mathematics skills are not developed well in other subjects. Equally, pupils are given too many worksheets and in many subjects other than English and mathematics, the input for the class is at the same level for all.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Teachers and staff place a high priority on pupils' safety and well-being. They provide them with good pastoral support and guidance and have worked well to support improved punctuality. Despite good efforts, attendance is proving harder to improve. Parents are positive about the care shown to their children as reflected in comments such as, 'When my child started school they were very scared but they soon settled in very well and they even want to go to school during the holidays.' New joiners settle into school quickly and are well supported. Child protection procedures are fully in place and risk assessments are carried out conscientiously. Substantial links with outside agencies support all pupils, particularly more vulnerable groups. Provision for academic support is not as robust as the provision for pastoral care. This is at an early stage and its impact on pupils' progress and their understanding of their level of performance is limited. Marking provides insufficient guidance about how pupils can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, with his recently constituted leadership team, is aware of what the school needs to do to improve. The school's evaluation of its own performance is too generous in some areas. Self-evaluation does feed into the school improvement plan which, whilst identifying appropriate areas for development, is not yet linked to measurable impact on the pupils' education. The leadership team is monitoring the performance of the school but this information is not yet used rigorously to raise standards and improve the quality of education. Data to track pupils' progress are not yet routinely used by staff and the instability in the leadership team this year has led to some slippage in this process. Governance is good. The governing body accurately reflects the community's views of the school that it is a warm and welcoming place where children want to come. It is alert to the need to raise standards and has supported the headteacher in extending the leadership team to ensure that this happens. Through the quality and standards committee it is effective in holding the school to account for its performance.

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Annex A

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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

6 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Gulson Primary School, Coventry, CV1 4HB

Thank you for helping us and being so friendly when we visited your school. The number of you that came up to us and said 'Welcome to John Gulson School' was very impressive. Equally impressive was your behaviour, which was outstanding and a credit to all of you. Well done.

This letter is to let you know what we found out about your school, which provides you with a satisfactory education. This means that it has a number of strengths, but could also improve in some areas. Most of you make satisfactory progress although standards in reading, writing and mathematics are low when you leave in Year 6. Those of you who do not come to school regularly or who take extended holidays do not do as well as your classmates. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to speed up your progress so that standards are higher. Teaching is satisfactory but there are times when lessons could move at a faster rate and many of you could be given harder work. Quite a few of you said that you found your work easy. We have asked the school to look at this as well because it will also improve your progress.

The adults in the school look after you well. They are caring and this makes you all feel safe. Many of the activities that the school offers you help a lot with your personal development. This means that you leave the school as sensible, mature young people. It was good to see how much many of you enjoy taking responsibility, such as being 'Playground Pals' and 'Escorters.' You all get on with each other really well and it was a pleasure to observe you all working and playing together. The school keeps information on your progress and standards. We have asked it to make better use of this information when providing you with work and organising lessons.

All of the adults involved at the school are keen that it improves. They regularly check what is going on. We have asked them to improve their checking so that you all make better progress and the school gets better and better. You can help the school improve by continuing to behave as well as you do now, making sure that you come to school regularly and telling your teachers if you want more challenge in the work you are set.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell Lead inspector

Annex B

6 June 2008

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Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell
Lead inspector