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Mr Robert Mann
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mann

Short inspection of St Giles Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 2018, 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 June 2014.

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 previous inspection, there have been several staffing changes, including to the school's leadership team. You were appointed as headteacher in April 2016, having previously been the deputy headteacher. You appointed a new deputy headteacher and all teaching staff in lower key stage 2. Most members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, have joined the school in the last two years. As headteacher, you quickly and accurately identified a progressive decline in standards and weaknesses in teaching. Together, governors and leaders have worked effectively with the local authority and local schools to improve provision. As a result, attainment is rising and progress is becoming stronger. However, further work is needed to restore and secure the good quality of education in the school.

You have created a highly inclusive and nurturing culture across the school. Good relationships exist in all classes, and all adults are attentive to pupils' individual needs. Good-quality support is provided for pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. This has resulted in a calmer and more purposeful learning environment. You have high expectations of staff and pupils and have set a clear and ambitious vision for the school. You have established better links with the infant partner school. These have resulted in improved transition arrangements and

continuity of learning from Year 2 to Year 3. Pupils joining the school this term have settled quickly.

Most parents are pleased with the work of the school and would recommend it to others. They appreciate the welcoming atmosphere you have created and the approachability of staff. As one parent summarised it, 'best school, amazing headteacher, great teachers and my children are very happy'. Parents also value the opportunities provided to help them support their children at home. Workshops and 'home-learning' events present parents with ideas to help their children. For example, workshops focused on improving measuring skills through cookery, and number work through games such as darts or board games. This initiative has engaged parents more fully in their children's learning and built effective home-school relationships.

You have responded positively to some of the key areas for improvement from the previous inspection report. You have taken steps to secure consistently good teaching and developed robust action plans to guide the improvements needed. While there has been a notable and impressive improvement in reading achievement recently, further improvement is needed in writing and mathematics so that pupils reach and exceed the expected standards. Teachers do not challenge pupils well enough and some work is not matched to pupils' individual abilities. Disadvantaged pupils, particularly, do considerably less well than their peers and other pupils nationally. Leaders have secured an accurate system to record the attainment of pupils across the school, but systems to determine and analyse progress are underdeveloped.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping children safe within the school. Systems are clear and fit for purpose. Records relating to child protection are detailed, well organised and secure. Training for staff and governors is comprehensive, regular and effective. As a result, all adults understand their safeguarding responsibilities well. They readily report any concerns that they have, secure in the knowledge that they will be dealt with speedily and appropriately. You or your deputy headteacher involve outside agencies for support when needed, and you have no fear in sharing your concerns with parents. The actions that you take are always in the best interests of children.

Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to stay safe. This is because the school teaches safety well through assemblies, visitors and events. The curriculum also focuses closely on teaching protective behaviours so that children know what to do in different circumstances. They are clear, for example, that they should not upload any personal information to the internet without their parents' knowledge. Pupils also understand and comply with the school's policy on surrendering their mobile phones to the school office during the day. They know about the dangers of cyber bullying, and that mobile phones are a distraction from their learning.

Inspection findings

- Together with governors, you evaluate strengths and weaknesses accurately and honestly. You have formulated clear action plans to address issues. Current plans are sharply focused on improving standards. However, due to a decline in key stage 2 outcomes since the previous inspection, the local authority has increased its level of support. The school improvement adviser conducts termly visits, and effective training has been provided to strengthen leadership and teaching. Additional financial support has also been accessed for the school as a result of the local authority making a bid for funding from The Department for Education's Strategic School Improvement Fund. This has helped the school purchase additional resources and target areas of greatest need. You have embraced this support and work collaboratively with advisers at each task group meeting. Minutes from these meetings show that the school is moving in the right direction.
- Pupils are regularly assessed, including an assessment on entry to Year 3 to establish their starting points. Standardised tests and teachers' own assessments are used for this purpose. You carry out checks with local schools to ensure that assessments are accurate and reliable. A school tracking system collates this information and allows leaders to present attainment data to governors and the local authority at set times during the year. However, the progress measure is less well developed. The system does not identify the progress made by individual pupils or reveal clearly enough where progress is weakest or strongest. This prevents additional support being put in place to help pupils make better progress.
- Subject leaders have provided good support for colleagues to help improve the quality of teaching. Training, regular feedback and mentoring all contribute to ensuring that teaching is consistently good. As a result, teaching is improving but some inconsistencies remain. Subject leaders are, however, unclear about the progress of pupils in their respective areas due to the limitations in current tracking procedures. This prevents them targeting support even more precisely for both staff and pupils.
- Governors make a positive contribution to school improvement. They are knowledgeable and experienced. They ask leaders probing questions and hold them to account. For example, governors themselves identified the issue regarding a lack of information about pupils' progress. They realise the importance of accurate and reliable data and are therefore challenging leaders to provide this information. Governors also meet regularly with subject leaders for updates on the actions they have taken and carry out their own learning walks and book looks to gather first-hand information. They are supportive and committed. Governors carry out their statutory duties diligently and effectively.
- Leaders have rightly prioritised raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. This is also a focus for the strategic school improvement task group. Funding is appropriately targeted to reduce barriers to pupils' learning, for example to improve their attendance, support their social and emotional development and monitor their behaviour. You fund additional staff to support these aspects. These include a learning mentor, teaching assistant and pupil premium leader.

Some interventions have been successful. For example, the nurture room provides a calm and comforting environment, and you have focused effectively on times tables. However, pupils' work and school's own assessment information show that too many disadvantaged pupils are still working below the expected levels and too few reach the higher levels. Differences in their attainment compared to their peers and to other pupils nationally are not diminishing rapidly enough.

- Teachers explain tasks clearly and give immediate feedback in lessons. Consequently, pupils are clear about what to do and how well they are achieving. Teachers share planning to ensure that there is consistency between different classes. Most pupils present their work neatly and have positive attitudes to learning. New initiatives and systems have contributed to the rising attainment seen in the 2018 Year 6 results, especially in reading. However, generally, there is a lack of challenge and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Books show that teachers do not promote higher-order skills well enough and accept limited amounts of work too readily. This directly affects pupils' progress and reduces the proportion of pupils able to demonstrate that they are working at greater depth, especially in writing and mathematics.
- The school piloted a new mathematics programme in the summer term with a Year 4 class. Pupils made good gains in their learning. Consequently, you are phasing in this programme across the whole school. Early evidence shows a greater focus on problem-solving activities, which pupils are starting to get to grips with. Pupils are also encouraged to apply different number skills within a task. However, work is not set at the appropriate level for some pupils and is too difficult. For example, given a set number, pupils had to halve it, double it, add 1000 to it, divide it by three and so on. Pupils who had limited mental mathematical skills and gaps in their learning struggled with this activity. As a result, they got most of their answers wrong. Such errors limit their progress and affect their confidence. Pupils' reasoning skills are also still at an early stage of development.
- Teachers make effective links between whole-class reading material and writing activities. This is helping strengthen pupils' overall literacy skills. For example, they have answered comprehension questions about 'Charlotte's web' and sequenced the events in 'The highwayman'. Writing across the curriculum is also well promoted. In terms of grammar, punctuation and spelling skills, the school has purchased resources and taught specific lessons to improve pupils' grasp of these aspects. While test results are rising at the end of Year 6, pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills remain weak. They do not apply what they learn in set exercises to their independent writing.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has been above the national average over time. My checks on behaviour records showed that incidents and exclusions have reduced. Records are thorough and detailed and show that appropriate action is taken. The school's behaviour policy is applied fairly. Pupils have a detailed understanding of the school's behaviour policy and the sanctions and rewards. Leaders monitor behaviour carefully and take appropriate action. It is evident that some pupils have complex behavioural and emotional needs. You and your staff are committed to supporting these pupils. Nurture and support provided by

the learning mentor, together with effective behaviour management by teachers, have enabled pupils to remain in school and engage more positively with adults and their peers. Strong relationships are built between staff and individuals and as a result, pupils behave well and try their best. Pupils, parents and midday supervisors agree that behaviour is good. This was certainly the case in lessons during the inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop and utilise an efficient and accurate method of tracking pupils' progress to pinpoint where strengths and weaknesses lie
- teaching presents greater levels of challenge to pupils to enable an increased proportion to reach and exceed the expected standards
- teachers meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils fully to diminish differences in their attainment compared with their peers and other pupils nationally
- pupils are taught strategies to increase the accuracy of their use of grammar, punctuation and spelling to improve their writing
- teachers develop pupils' reasoning skills further in mathematics and set work at the right level for pupils' different abilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, members of your leadership team and governing body, and a school improvement adviser from the local authority. I discussed the work of the school, including the processes and procedures in place for safeguarding. Together with school leaders, I observed teaching in all classes, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I talked to pupils at lunchtime to gather their views about school and determine if they felt safe and the typicality of behaviour.

I looked at a range of school documents, including the school's own information about pupils' achievement. I reviewed the school's evaluation of its work, together with reports from the local authority. I took account of the 25 responses to Ofsted's

online questionnaire, Parent View, and the free-text responses from parents. Views of parents who collected their children at the end of the school day were also considered.

The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2015 to 2017.