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Ms Deborah Strain
Headteacher
Gainsborough Primary School
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Dear Ms Strain

Short inspection of Gainsborough Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and your staff have put the needs of your pupils and their families at the forefront of your work. The school ethos of challenging yourselves every day is seen through your desire to improve the life chances of your pupils. The school is an integral part of the local community. Parents and carers praised the school. A number of them told me that they appreciate the many opportunities to come into school and see how their children are learning, and that they are encouraged to give their feedback because you value their views. The school challenges pupils to aspire to be the best they can. Pupils consistently leave the school with the academic skills that give them the best chance to flourish in the next stage of their education. Pupils' progress in reading and mathematics is consistently above national averages and you have detailed plans in place to bring writing in line.

You have prioritised pupils' communication skills and consequently literacy is a school priority. Parental involvement in reading is encouraged. The school appreciates how reading at home supports pupils' progress, and that improvements in the literacy levels of parents ultimately benefits their children. The school helps parents find local literacy support. Parents and pupils attend handwriting workshops and the uptake has been high. Parents are encouraged to use school resources to

support home learning.

Leaders and governors understand the diverse nature of the school community. Your International Days celebrate the cross-section of cultures found at your school. Staff appreciate that those pupils with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are an important part of every class. Wherever possible they are supported to learn alongside their peers. All pupils benefit from this inclusive nature and the mutual respect between them was clearly visible in their positive relationships. Links with local secondary schools, within your teaching school alliance, are used to help those who speak English as an additional language access the curriculum. These pupils quickly gain the necessary skills to work alongside their peers.

Leaders design educational visits with both the wider curriculum in mind and also to broaden the experiences of its pupils. The school uses local amenities to supplement its site, including a local park for sports day and the nearby Olympic swimming pool. By using public transport, pupils gain valuable life skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Keeping children safe is central to the ethos of the school and leaders have created a culture where safeguarding is central to pupil welfare. Adults at the school have received the latest training on safeguarding. They know what to do if a pupil is at risk and how to report issues. By regularly checking school records, governors ensure that safeguarding procedures and policies are followed. Attendance levels have risen and are now in line with national rates.

Leaders understand the local context and have designed a curriculum that reflects the wider school community. Pupils receive age-appropriate information, including personal and online safety advice. Similarly, parents receive advice on keeping their children safe online. Pupils know what to do if they feel threatened. They told me that they feel safe at school. Pupils also told me that bullying is rare, but when it does happen, teachers act quickly to resolve issues.

Inspection findings

- At our initial meeting we agreed on three lines of enquiry. The first centred on the quality of writing at the school. This was chosen because, despite consistent pupil progress at key stage 2 in line with national levels, writing is not at the standard of reading and mathematics.
- Together with middle and senior leaders, we examined a selection of pupils' books from across year groups. Pupils are improving their sentence structure. In their own writing, and that of their peers, pupils recognise common errors. At key stage 2, pupils regularly include similes and metaphors in their writing. Possessive apostrophes are used accurately by Year 5 pupils. In key stage 1 the most able successfully edit their work. Because of leaders' high expectations, those learners whose first language is not English have made accelerated progress. The most recent school information shows that a significant number of pupils are on track

to reach the expected standard in writing.

- Children are well prepared for their writing. In Reception classes they begin to form their letters and rehearse what is required for more structured writing. Children practise their fine and gross motor skills. They rehearse their mark-making in stimulating and varied activities, including painting and drawing. Older children continue these themes but also begin to write their own names. Writing lessons begin purposefully; for example, adults encourage correct posture, pen-holding and a writing mindset. Writing routines from an early age ensure that pupils are ready to write.
- Writing has a high profile across all subjects. A highlight for pupils every year is the school 'raid' where pupils encounter exciting environments within the school leading to discussions and imaginative writing with enhanced vocabulary. In maths books, pupils regularly write explanations of their work and teachers provide feedback on their writing.
- Standards of handwriting in the books seen was variable. Some books showed that pupils were unable to maintain their handwriting skills. Other books showed that pupils' cursive writing skills are less developed than their peers. Leaders have embarked on a programme to improve handwriting, but this is in its early stages and it is too early to see the expected improvements.
- The second line of enquiry was based on the relatively high rates of pupils who arrive at and leave the school during the academic year. This was chosen because during these transitions pupils, especially those who speak English as an additional language, are particularly vulnerable.
- Through a comprehensive induction programme, pupils are quickly integrated into the school. Initial assessments, including academic, social and language compatibility, are carried out. New pupils are given the very best support when they arrive at the school. Pupils are paired with existing pupils, through a buddy system, so that transitions are as smooth as possible. Parents and pupils told me that they appreciated the support the school gave them on arrival.
- There are robust systems in place to safeguard pupils when they move to another school. Pupils are tracked to ensure that they reach their destinations. Leaders make regular contact with new schools to make sure that all pupils arrive at their new schools. Leaders are rigorous in ensuring the safety of pupils.
- The third line of enquiry considered pupils' skills in using phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). This was agreed because a recent phonics screening check showed that pupils, on average, were below national standards.
- Year 1 phonics results in 2017 were below national standards. Leaders have made significant investment in reading across the school. Adult-pupil ratios have increased and a programme of tailored support for pupils is in place. Pupils across year groups learn their phonics together. An example of how the school individualises its curriculum offer is how the school moves pupils, for particular lessons, including phonics, between year groups. They benefit from working with pupils of similar abilities and the tailored teaching approach.
- Skilled staff use a wide range of techniques to improve pupil's reading ability. For example, I saw pupils practising memory techniques using frequent words cards.

In another classroom, pupils who speak English as an additional language had access to resources in their native language, as a picture and in English. The most recent phonics screening check showed improvement and pupils now exceed their peers nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's emphasis on writing, and especially handwriting, leads to progress at key stage 2 closer to that in other core subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Newham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jason Hughes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I spoke to a number of parents and their children at the beginning of the school day. I looked at a range of pupils' work, together with teachers and middle and senior leaders. I met with trust governors and members of the trust board of directors. Leaders accompanied me on visits to lessons, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked at their work. I examined a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, including the single central record.

I scrutinised Ofsted's online survey for parents (29 responses) and associated commentary (19 comments), the staff survey (31 responses) as well as responses to the pupil survey (25 responses). I examined the school's website and reviewed information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I also considered the school's evaluation of how well it is doing, its improvement priorities and assessment information for current pupils. I also met with the school's improvement partner.