

Serco Inspections  
Colmore Plaza  
20 Colmore Circus Queensway  
Birmingham  
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T:** 0121 679 9160  
**Direct email:** antony.grace@serco.com

28 February 2013

Catriona Mugglestone  
Headteacher  
Merrydale Junior School  
Claydon Road  
Leicester  
LE5 0PL

Dear Mrs Mugglestone

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Merrydale Junior School**

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and members of the governing body gave when I inspected your school on 27 February 2013 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also convey my thanks to the school improvement adviser from the local authority who met with me, and the pupils who kindly showed me around the school.

The school has undergone some significant changes to teaching staff since its last inspection. This has also meant a leadership change for one year group and has left a temporary gap in curriculum leadership.

As a result of the inspection on 3 July 2012, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The school is led by a determined and focused headteacher and deputy headteacher who have maintained strong leadership throughout this time of the school being in a category of concern. They have focused on the most important issues and taken decisive action where needed. Senior leaders are beginning to build an increasingly effective team, with a similar vision for turning the school around, although it is too early to assess their impact. The governing body is also determined to help improve the school and ensure that pupils are at the heart of what they do. There is a good range of expertise and capacity within the governing body to ensure that it is able to fulfil its role of checking on the school's progress. The school has given an accurate evaluation of itself and can demonstrate that priorities are being tackled urgently and are leading to improvement in all aspects of the school's work and ultimately to outcomes for pupils. Improvement has been slower for pupils in classes which have

suffered the most staffing disruption this year and in the past. The school is working hard to improve the achievement of cohorts with a legacy of underachievement.

When the school went into a category of concern in July 2012, this followed a turbulent time with regard to staffing and the inconsistent progress of pupils was an important issue. Since that time, the school has done much to try to stabilise staffing, eradicate inadequate teaching and tackle these inconsistencies. Of significance, is the school continuing to work at improving pupils' attendance and behaviour, which needed to be addressed before the school could improve learning. As a result of taking effective measures, attendance is being maintained at around the national average and pupils' behaviour is no longer a barrier to learning. There is a calm atmosphere in school and pupils mostly conduct their behaviour well, knowing who to turn to if they require support. Pupils who find it difficult to behave well are supported effectively by a behaviour mentor and the school has increasingly close links with external partners with whom they communicate regularly.

Whilst the percentage of good teaching is improving, there is still too much teaching which is not yet good. Staff have responded well to professional development and school leaders are checking the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement and progress. They know the importance of having accurate assessment data for each child and for every class, and this is developing well. Data still reflects some variation across year groups, but this is being addressed. The early signs for this academic year are that pupils' progress in reading and mathematics requires improvement overall, although it is good in some classes. Pupils' progress in writing is inadequate overall, but is improving. The school realises that the under-developed speaking skills of many pupils has a significant impact on their success in their writing and for explaining their workings in mathematics. Although pupils currently in Year 6 are predicted to attain closer to the levels which are nationally expected for their age, very few pupils are likely to attain higher levels. Year 6 pupils are unlikely to make as much progress in English and mathematics as is targeted nationally. The school rightly recognises that progress must be better than average in order for pupils to catch up and achieve what is nationally expected for their age. The school is likely to need longer to improve this than within the time frame for their next inspection, even though all staff and leaders are working with urgency.

Monitoring of teaching and planning indicates that the pace of lessons has improved and around half are now good. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Lessons are generally better planned around pupils' needs. However, in some classes, teachers are not using assessment opportunities regularly enough to check on pupils' understanding within the lesson so that they can adjust teaching and the activities where needed. Expectations for handwriting and presentation are not consistent across the school. Staff are following a new marking policy but comments are not always easy for pupils to understand and do not consistently and clearly identify the next steps that pupils need to take to improve their work. Insufficient time is generally given to pupils to improve their work.

The local authority's statement of action was judged by Ofsted to be fit for purpose. The local authority has provided all of the support that it committed to in its plan and this has been extremely beneficial to the school's improvement. Access to a school improvement adviser and a range of specialists has ensured the school has prioritised its work correctly and that staff have sufficient expertise to lead their areas of responsibility. Partnership with another local school who is a local leader in education has been crucial for improving the quality of teaching and for checking the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' work. The schools are working well together to provide mutual support and sharing of ideas.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2012**

- Improve the progress made by pupils across the school so that it is at least in line with, and usually better than expected progress in all year groups by September 2013, through:
  - eradicating any remaining inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion of good teaching to at least 60% of all lessons
  - ensuring that assessment opportunities are regularly and consistently used to check pupils' understanding and progress within lessons, and to adapt teaching accordingly
  - using information about previous learning to inform planning to match the needs of all pupils
  - ensuring that marking and feedback provide clear guidance on the next steps in learning, and that pupils are given opportunities to respond to and improve their work as a result
  - refining the use of assessment data in order to track and evaluate progress even more carefully and to provide timely intervention where required.
  
- Further develop pupils' involvement in the school by:
  - encouraging children to be independent learners who are increasingly able to regulate their own conduct and behaviour when not directly supported by staff
  - providing broader opportunities for pupils to take positions of responsibility and develop decision-making skills.