

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

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

**Direct T** 0117 311 5323  
**Direct email:** suzy.smith@triblagroup.com

15 May 2013

Cheryl Johnson  
Headteacher  
Merebrook Infant School  
Dulverton Drive  
Milton Keynes  
MK4 1EZ

Dear Miss Johnson

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit to Merebrook Infant School under section 8 of the Education act 2005**

Following my visit to your school on the 15 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection in February 2013.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and your deputy headteacher. We walked around each class and observed pupils working and playing. I met with a representative from the local authority and with five governors. I evaluated your school improvement plan and reviewed some of the school improvement work conducted since the last inspection.

#### **Context**

You took up the post of headteacher about 4 weeks ago, replacing the interim headteacher who had been at the school for approximately 1 year.

#### **Main findings**

You have established yourself as headteacher in the school, quickly getting to know the strengths and weaknesses that exist. Your action plan shows how you intend to tackle the most important areas for development, as identified at the last inspection. This plan makes sense. I could quickly see what you intend to do and what you hope to achieve. You have set out to make clear the expectations for teaching,

learning and behaviour so that all staff know the procedures to follow. Your plan focuses on the immediate work to be done in the next term and, considering your recent appointment, this is appropriate. I look forward to seeing how your improvement plan evolves into a wider development plan so that by September you are able to show how you intend to be a good or better school in 18 months' time.

A scheme for teaching reading, writing and spelling has been introduced in all classes. We observed teachers and teaching assistants using these resources with varying effect. There were several patterns emerging where teaching required improvement. Some teachers were not thinking about the wider learning needs of different groups and some adults had to work very hard to keep pupils on task. In some lessons, teachers were presenting the content as shown on lesson plans but not checking carefully enough for pupils' understanding. As you move forward in developing teaching, it is important that your monitoring does not just focus on teachers delivering the scheme but on teachers taking account of different learners' needs and adapting their approach accordingly. I know that this is something that you are aware of and I was pleased to see that your new teaching and learning policy refers to this.

Even though you have been at the school for a very short time, you have already observed teaching in all classes. Your findings from these short observations are unambiguous and in line with what I saw today. I am confident in your ability to make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching. Some of the written feedback for teachers refers to certain strategies being used in lessons. It will be useful to reflect the consequence of these strategies when you give feedback. This tweak will help teachers and leaders to reflect on the purpose of what they do.

You are reviewing the functions of the leadership team and plan to have a structure in place by September. Our conversation today gave me confidence in your ability to do this effectively. I look forward to seeing this structure, the rationale for positions and the training and support that you will broker for new and emerging leaders.

The last inspection identified the fact that not enough was done to allow teachers to learn from each other. You are tackling this by placing each teacher in a mutually beneficial coaching group. I am pleased to hear that you are also visiting other schools that have been successful in, for example, embedding the reading and phonics scheme that you are introducing. I am also pleased to hear that you are working with other schools in the locality, including a pre-school where many of your reception children come from, to develop effective and smooth transition. This can only be a good thing for the children you serve.

During our learning walk we discussed the noise and the way that this travels through your open-plan building. I was interested to hear of your ideas to make adaptations and I think that this is a sensible consideration, particularly in the areas where class teaching in Year 1 merges with indoor play in the Early Years

Foundation Stage. It is important that children can learn in an environment where they can concentrate without distractions.

The governing body has recently gone through significant changes. Other than staff governors, only one member of the governing body has served for more than one year. Governors are committed to developing their skills. They have arranged for bespoke training to help them fulfil their role effectively. The Chair of the Governing Body is skilful at delegating roles and, as a result, different governors are developing their expertise in different fields. Governors are quick to point out that they are inexperienced but, despite this, their observations about the school are accurate and insightful.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- Ensure the action plan evolves into a school development plan that shows the school's journey to good over the next 18 months
- Ensure that monitoring helps teachers focus on the impact of their actions so they more effectively promote learning
- Think about the organisation of the building and the potential for partitioning of spaces so pupils can work undisturbed.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided an enhanced level of support during a period of turbulence. They have supported the rebuilding of the governing body and continue to support the development of governors' skills and competencies. A local authority consultant provides support to senior leaders and conducts some monitoring of school improvement. They provided an interim headteacher and guided governors in the appointment of the new substantive headteacher.

The local authority have provided financial support for teachers and leaders to partake in training courses such as the National College's 'leading from the middle' and the outstanding teachers' programme.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Milton Keynes.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**