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6 July 2015

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

Dear Ms Johnson

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Merebrook Infant School**

Following my visit to your school on 3 July 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. 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.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- make sure that senior and middle leaders, who are returning to school, are crystal clear about the priorities for improvement and their role in delivering them
- closely monitor improvements in the quality of teaching and behaviour to ensure they are consistent across all classes in Year 1
- ensure governors are clear about their role in holding the school to account for the impact of planned changes after September 2015.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the numeracy leader, representatives from the governing body, including the Chair and vice-chair, and a representative from the local authority. I evaluated the school's action plan and visited all classes in Year 1.

## **Context**

The early years leader is currently on long-term absence; the deputy headteacher who is also the literacy lead is due to return from long-term absence on 13 July. One newly qualified teacher left at Easter 2015. At the start of the summer term, two temporary teachers joined the school and one permanent teacher joined the school.

## **Main findings**

Your short-term action plan has helped you to make a prompt start on improving the school and you have successfully completed many of the actions on the plan. Due to the absence of your deputy headteacher and other leaders, your plan focuses on the period before they return. You have not yet written a detailed improvement plan which identifies the actions you need to take in the longer term. The Year 1 class has now been divided into three smaller classes which has led to improved behaviour in most of the new classes. You have also changed the way you teach writing across the school and strengthened the input the numeracy leader makes to improve your school. However, the behaviour of a small number of pupils in Year 1 remains poor and the teaching of writing in one Year 1 class remains weak.

You have improved the way writing is taught in most classes. You have introduced more opportunities for pupils to talk about the topic they are writing about. You have also improved the way you mark writing so that teachers now give pupils feedback on their word choices, presentation and letter formation. Consequently, teachers in most classes now plan writing tasks that are both challenging and engaging for pupils. For example, in one Year 1 class, the teacher introduced the task of describing the seaside by asking the pupils to listen to seaside sounds, taste food associated with the seaside and handle items found on the beach. The teacher followed this up with focused work on which adjectives best described the different sensations the pupils had experienced. However, in another class the pupils were not making progress because the teacher had not thought carefully enough about how to make sure the pupils made good vocabulary choices. In this class pupils suggested adjectives that were not vivid and the teacher did not use probing questions to encourage the pupils to evaluate and further develop the words they had chosen. You have robust plans to improve the quality of teaching in this class.

The numeracy leader has enhanced her contribution to improving the school. The numeracy lead has observed mathematics lessons and provided robust feedback to staff on the quality of their teaching. The numeracy lead has used these lesson

observations to build a better picture of what aspects of numeracy teaching need further development. She has rightly identified that pupils' mathematical reasoning is underdeveloped and has created a detailed plan to rectify this next term.

Pupils' behaviour has improved. In most classes the majority of pupils behave well. Teaching assistants have received additional training to help them manage pupils' behaviour more effectively. As a result, most, but not all, teaching assistants are better at helping pupils to employ learnt approaches to control their own behaviour. However, a minority of pupils' behaviour in Year 1 remains poor. For example, in one class the teacher did not reinforce her expectations of pupils' conduct and allowed some to shout-out answers to questions and a number to speak while she was talking to the whole class. This meant some pupils were not focused enough on their learning and their progress slowed down as a result.

Governors know the school well because they make frequent visits and ask leaders to report back to them. They have helped to bring about some of the immediate improvements. For example, they have agreed additional funding for three classes in Year 1 and supported the headteacher in her robust response to some pupils' repeated poor behaviour. However, governors are not clear enough about their role in ensuring leaders' actions give rise to further improvement after September. Some governors are not confident enough about the best way to monitor the impact of planned changes.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school has benefited from the support of a range of consultants and partners which have led to improvements. A local leader of education has given help to the headteacher. A specialist leader of education has worked alongside the numeracy leader and a local authority literacy consultant has provided support for writing. The local authority improvement partner has set up a Targeted Improvement Board to oversee changes. This board effectively supports improvement because it sets tight timescales for changes to be made, ensures that governors are fully involved and coordinates external support. The improvement partner has agreed to provide further support to governors by linking them to governors in a good school with a similar context.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**