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20 June 2017

Ms Vivienne Ainsworth-Brown  
Headteacher  
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Liverpool  
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Dear Ms Ainsworth-Brown

### **Short inspection of Melling Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2017, 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 October 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

'This is a cracking little school' were the words of one parent who communicated with me during the inspection. This sums up the views of almost all parents who completed inspection questionnaires, texted me, spoke to me or emailed me. Pupils, too, express how happy they are. They say that their teachers really care for them and take every opportunity to help and support them.

The school's long-established ethos of helping every child to be as good as they can be is demonstrated daily by all staff and by the pupils themselves. Pupils make a considerable contribution to the culture of the school in the way that they work hard and support each other. They respect others, and their behaviour and attitudes to work are excellent. Children are proud of their school and rightly so.

You ensured that the continued success and improvement of the school was not interrupted during its transition as you became headteacher in September of 2014. You demonstrated your experience and skill in identifying the school's strengths and ensuring that those continued. You evaluated the impact of all aspects of the school and identified accurately areas in need of improvement. You rightly prioritise improvements and have implemented very effective strategies to ensure that the school continues to improve.

In this school, pupils' welfare and happiness are paramount. Pupils feel secure. They are well taught and overall make strong progress. Governors make a very valuable contribution to a highly successful leadership team.

Teachers work hard, preparing learning activities that are interesting and meet the needs of their pupils very precisely. Teachers use a consistent approach to assessment throughout the school. Teachers have taught their pupils how to evaluate their own work, providing immediate assessment to both teachers and pupils themselves. If a pupil has not grasped a concept, the teacher can give further guidance instantly or arrange for a teaching assistant to support the pupil later that day or, at the latest, the following day. This immediate response to addressing pupils' misunderstandings ensures that they do not fall behind. You, other leaders and governors have very good systems to monitor pupils' progress. This means that you can intervene quickly when you identify any slowing of progress.

Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to supporting pupils' progress, particularly those pupils who occasionally need a little extra help.

Achievement in English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6 is very strong. Achievement in mathematics has been consistently strong throughout the school and achievement in English has improved quickly. Leaders have identified that some boys in Years 1 and 3 are not attaining as highly in English as boys nationally. They are also aware that achievement in subjects apart from English and mathematics is not quite as strong as in those core subjects. Leaders have started to address these.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your leadership team have ensured that all arrangements to promote safeguarding are efficient and effective. Pupils know that their welfare is of paramount importance to all staff and so trust their teachers explicitly. Pupils say that they would be confident to raise any concerns they had with staff. The close bond between pupils and staff ensures that pupils feel safe and that they are safe.

Safeguarding procedures are systematic, and records show a well-informed and organised approach. You ensure that staff are well trained. They know how to identify any signs of potential abuse and how to raise concerns. All leaders work well with external agencies and they know when to refer concerns. Recruitment procedures are secure.

Online safety is developed well in the school and even young pupils can explain how to keep themselves safe when using social media or using the internet. Bullying in the school is rare. The school's environment is safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- Children normally start Reception with levels of development that are typical for their age. However, this can vary considerably from year to year. The highly

effective leader of the early years provision adapts what children will do and learn depending on their needs. For example, last year, teachers spent a great deal of time promoting social and emotional development in response to children's learning needs. While a larger proportion of children than usual did not attain levels of development that would be considered typical, this action enabled children to make good progress, ensuring that they were well prepared for key stage 1. The indoor environment is exciting. You have secured much-needed funding to improve the outdoor area. Whether indoors or out, staff ensure that activities are stimulating. Children currently in the early years provision are making strong progress.

- The teaching of mathematics has been consistently strong over a number of years. Your staff have adapted well to changes in the curriculum and assessment. You have been instrumental in developing a whole-school strategy to the teaching of mathematics. The approach is very well considered and systematic. Teachers know what is expected of them and know how their work fits in with the work of teachers in other classes. Pupils experience different mathematics sessions throughout the day. Some sessions develop pupils' arithmetical mental agility, speed and confidence, while others help pupils develop their mathematical understanding and skills. Pupils apply these elements to solve mathematical problems. Achievement in mathematics is strong throughout the school.
- Across the school, pupils' achievement in English is catching up with achievement in mathematics quickly. Leaders and teachers have adopted a very systematic approach to developing pupils' understanding of phonics. This is giving young pupils a sound foundation from which they can develop their reading, spelling and writing skills. Pupils read well. For most, the quality of their writing is improving quickly. However, the quality of boys' writing in Years 1 and 3 is weaker than their peers nationally. You are fully aware of this and are taking effective action to raise their attainment quickly.
- You have taken significant steps to improve further the achievement pupils make in subjects other than in the core subjects of English and mathematics. You have allocated subject leadership responsibilities. These leaders are beginning to adapt the very successful school strategies used to improve English and mathematics to raising achievement across non-core subjects. Pupils study subject themes for a whole day or a full week. This has played a significant role in promoting a diverse and engaging curriculum. While teachers take every opportunity to ensure that their pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, more needs to be done to promote subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding beyond the core curriculum.
- The work that Melling Primary School does to support disadvantaged pupils received public recognition last year when you received a letter of congratulation from the Department for Education. Disadvantaged pupils who attend Melling do as well as other pupils nationally. This has been achieved through the hard work of all staff. A dedicated senior leader and a tenacious governor champion all disadvantaged pupils, no matter what their ability. You monitor the achievement, attendance and social and emotional development of every disadvantaged child with considerable rigour. The school seeks and creates opportunities to ensure that individual disadvantaged pupils develop and flourish. Disadvantaged pupils

benefit considerably from the extended opportunities offered before, during and after school, where pupils can receive additional support, including with homework. Leaders and teachers work closely with parents, building very good and highly positive relationships.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- raise achievement still further across all non-core subjects so that it is at least as strong as achievement in English and mathematics
- raise the attainment of boys in Years 1 and Year 3 so that it is at least as good as the attainment of boys nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your deputy. I met with four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I spoke to groups of pupils during their break time. School documents were scrutinised including: safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching. I also visited classrooms with you to look at pupils' work. I examined child protection information. I took account of the 50 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I took account of responses from eight staff to an inspection survey. I considered the views of the 48 parents who shared their comments via text, one who met with me and one who emailed me their views.