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14 December 2011

Mrs Maguire  
Headteacher  
Medlock Primary School  
Wadeson Road  
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Dear Mrs Maguire

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Medlock Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 December 2011 for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Discussions with senior leaders and managers, the vice-chair of the governing body, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority were also very helpful. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave to talk to me and for the welcome I received.

There have been some changes to the school's context since the inspection in May 2010. Five members of teaching staff have left the school and five new teachers have been appointed. A new Chair of the Governing Body was elected in September 2011 and three new parent governors have joined the governing body.

As a result of the inspection on 5 May 2010, 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 has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They show respect to adults and to each other and are willing to share their ideas, listen to their classmates and work hard. Pupils' academic achievement is improving. The 2011 unvalidated test results show attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 remains well below the national average, but more pupils reached age-related expectations than in previous years. This is because inconsistencies in pupils' progress have been successfully tackled so more pupils make expected progress in each class. The progress of more-able pupils is variable and too few consistently attain the higher levels. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar and sometimes better progress than their peers. This is because they receive well-targeted intervention and effective support in lessons. Pupils' attainment in writing has improved because they are

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able to write creatively and for different purposes. However, many pupils have considerable gaps in their spelling, handwriting and punctuation skills which limit their overall achievement. Although some pupils make accelerated progress, particularly those pupils who have been at the school for the longest time, not enough pupils are making rapid enough progress to secure higher attainment levels. It is for this reason that progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory rather than good.

Teaching is stronger than at the time of the previous inspection because teachers make better use of assessment information to match activities to the needs of pupils, including the most able. All teaching is characterised by warm and trusting relationships and adults are increasingly using a range of questions to probe pupils' understanding and extend their learning. Adults are well deployed so that pupils with additional needs are well supported, for example, those pupils at the early stages of acquiring English as an additional language flourish during small group work. Considerable improvements to the quality of teachers' marking mean pupils receive relevant guidance on how to improve their work in English and mathematics. Clear success criteria for each lesson means pupils know what they need to do to achieve success and reach their individual targets. In the best lessons, teachers have very high expectations. They set clear standards in terms of the quality and quantity of work expected from each pupil. Teaching is less effective when adults do not intervene quickly enough to ensure pupils remain on task while working independently. The teaching of writing and mathematics has improved because whole-school policies are consistently applied. However, gaps in pupils' handwriting, punctuation and spelling skills are not being systematically addressed in all classes.

Determined leadership by the headteacher has led to an unequivocal focus on securing school improvement. As senior leaders and managers have become increasingly skilled and confident in their roles the pace of change across the school has gained momentum. These leaders and managers have made a significant contribution to driving improvement by leading whole-school training, providing individual support and regularly checking the quality of teaching and learning. Effective professional development and opportunities for teachers to observe and share good practice and expertise is leading to stronger teaching and consistent application of whole-school policies. Members of the governing body have become increasingly effective. Through the focused work of the school improvement committee, regular meetings with subject leaders and opportunities for first-hand monitoring they have gained an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, they are offering well-informed challenge to school leaders about pupils' achievement. The systems to monitor the work of the school are effective because they are regular and include all staff and pupils. The school has well-founded plans which are well focused on appropriate priorities to secure further improvement.

Considerable improvements to encouraging good attendance and monitoring absence mean attendance is rising and the number of pupils who are absent for the greatest amount of time has quickly reduced. Parents and carers are involved in this process as families benefit from the rewards offered through the Attendance Challenge, and half-termly letters to all parents and carers clearly identify any absence from school. Greater rigour in approving

term-time holidays means parents and carers are willing to provide evidence when seeking permission for authorised absence.

Overall, the school is in a stronger position than at the previous inspection. Sharper management systems, increasingly strong leaders and managers and effective monitoring have led to a common sense of purpose and a shared drive to secure further improvements. Teaching is improving and pupils are making more consistent progress and attending school more regularly. As a result, the school has made good progress in demonstrating a better capacity to improve.

The school has effectively identified the support it needs to promote further improvement. School leaders and managers have benefitted from external support to quality assure their monitoring systems while staff have enhanced their skills in teaching mathematics and writing with the support of outside experts. The school is forging productive links with neighbouring schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010**

- Improve the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make, so that they are consistently good by:
  - ensuring that teachers use day-to-day assessments to provide activities that are challenging and matched to the varied needs of all pupils
  - asking probing questions in lessons which give pupils, especially the more able, opportunities to develop and explain their ideas fully
  - reviewing targets more systematically with pupils so they clearly know how to improve.
  
- Improve the impact of leaders and managers at all levels on the school's improvement in raising attainment by:
  - ensuring that good practice is shared more consistently across the school
  - working more closely with families to secure their commitment to improving attendance
  - extending the capacity of leaders and the governing body still further to manage their areas of responsibility through coaching and training.