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30 January 2015

Ms Jacqueline McCallum  
Headteacher  
Mendell Primary School  
Allport Lane  
Bromborough  
Wirral  
Merseyside  
CH62 7HN

Dear Ms McCallum

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mendell Primary School, Wirral**

Following my visit to the school on 29 January 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 November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Further action is needed to:

- Make sure all staff in the school use the same accurate terminology for punctuation and grammar.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with two representatives of the local authority and five members of the governing body to discuss the impact of the actions taken since the previous inspection. In addition, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the two teachers who lead English and mathematics throughout the school. I held a brief discussion with a group of pupils.

## Context

Since the inspection, a teacher returned to school following maternity leave and the teacher who was covering the class has changed role to teach small groups of pupils across the school.

## Main findings

You, and your senior colleagues, wasted no time after the inspection in immediately tackling the areas identified in the Ofsted report. You have developed a new system of marking pupils' work which involves more frequent feedback and more time for pupils to respond to the advice or challenges. Pupils I spoke with reported that they like the system because it gives them clearer advice about how to make their work better and it gives them time after the previous lesson to make changes. Each pupil now has a bookmark on which are the non-negotiable expectations for their year group, such as finger spaces between words or capital letters at the start of every sentence. This, and the temptation of being able to use the golden pen, has meant pupils are more keen to tackle errors in their work than previously.

You have started to increase the leadership skills of teachers who lead subjects. This has resulted in the leader of English and the leader of mathematics for example, having a greater understanding of pupils' attainment and progress in their subjects and having more involvement in meetings to discuss the progress made in each class. They have greater responsibility for knowing and using data about pupils' achievement. The teacher who leads English has already noted and started work to make sure all staff use the same accurate terms for parts of sentences and punctuation. There is still some work to do to make sure the correct terminology is used instead for example, of 'wow words' and 'bossy' verbs.

Pupils' attendance has started to increase. This, in part, is because:

- pupils' weekly attendance is more prominently advertised and celebrated around the school and a higher priority for all staff
- staff take targeted action to increase the attendance of those who are regularly absent
- staff make home visits to parents and carers who frequently do not make sure their children are at school
- the headteacher has introduced effective incentives and rewards for good attendance
- an improved system results in very early contact with parents as soon as their child is absent
- the headteachers within the local cluster of schools have started to refuse holidays out of school time
- effective support for the family to improve parenting skills.

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

## **External support**

The governing body has drawn on the support and guidance of a National Leader in Governance, who conducted a review of the work of the governing body at the start of 2015. Members of the governing body have undertaken a self-evaluation to identify what skills and knowledge they can bring to school leadership and have identified and begun to fill any gaps in their knowledge and understanding. They have also reflected on the impact of the different committees and the frequency of meetings. As a result of these reviews the governing body is more reflective, has higher expectations of themselves and the school, and have begun to have a more detailed oversight of the quality and impact of teaching.

The local authority acted with speed and determination following the inspection by immediately increasing the level of support, challenge and scrutiny. Only a few weeks following the inspection the local authority conducted a useful review of pupils' work and then a thorough review of teaching, leadership and behaviour. The reviews have helped the school to develop a well-devised and structured action plan which, as well as tackling all of the issues identified in the Ofsted inspection report, also makes clear what needs to be tackled for the school to be judged as good at the next inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr

**Her Majesty's Inspector**