

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



11 January 2018

Mrs Catherine O'Neill Edwards
Mendell Primary School
Allport Lane
Bromborough
Wirral
Merseyside
CH62 7HN

Dear Mrs O'Neill Edwards

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mendell Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 December 2017, 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 2016. 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 in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- develop improvement plans so that they provide more detail about the actions taken to improve the school, so that governors can evaluate their impact more effectively
- develop greater depth of learning in science, geography and history
- ensure that the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning provides teachers with clear targets to improve their skills
- match tasks more closely to pupils' next steps in learning, particularly the most

able pupils, to accelerate their progress in mathematics and writing

- improve the presentation of pupils' work across the curriculum so they take pride in their learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. Her Majesty's Inspector conducted joint lesson observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and looked at the pupils' mathematics, writing, science, geography and history work. The inspector also looked at a range of documentation including the school's own monitoring records and minutes of the meetings of the governing body.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there has been a new headteacher and deputy headteacher, both of whom started in September 2017. There has also been a high turnover of teaching staff. Four teachers have been appointed since the last inspection and a further four teachers have returned from maternity leave. Due to the changes in staffing, there have been a number of temporary teachers that have been employed at the school since the previous inspection.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, there has been a high turnover of staff, including senior leaders. Governors have provided much needed continuity for the school and have reviewed their vision for the school so that all are aware of the direction of travel. The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have quickly gained a good grasp of the school. In a short space of time, they have taken positive steps to improve behaviour, teaching and learning. The headteacher has been effective in improving the weakest teaching in the school. Senior leaders have brought about a shift in the school's culture to focus more clearly upon pupils' progress. The staff that the inspector spoke to were positive about this. Staff now feel part of a cohesive team and there is a shared vision for improvement running throughout the school. The parents that Her Majesty's Inspector spoke to were extremely positive about the school and the communication that they receive, particularly in the early years.

The school's evaluation of its own performance is clear and accurate. This has informed leaders' plans to improve the school. There is a strong focus on the areas for improvement that were left at the last inspection. Although these plans have suitable targets, they sometimes lack detail about how the effectiveness of actions will be clearly measured and evaluated. However, governors maintain a good

oversight because they challenge school leaders. They ask relevant questions at governor meetings about how the school is improving. They are aware that leaders still require more time to evidence the impact of the recent actions.

Middle leaders feel valued and involved in the life of the school. Although many are new to their roles, they have a good grasp of what is needed to improve their areas of responsibility. However, their plans lack the necessary detail to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken to improve the school.

Leaders have introduced a clear system for tracking pupils' progress. This is used effectively to highlight pupils who need support so that they can make accelerated progress in their learning. The results are starting to show. In 2017, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics improved at the end of key stage 2. This is a result of targeted support for pupils. Leaders have been quick to evaluate how this has been successful. They have used key staff to extend this support further. External consultants have been used to support the development of teaching staff. This is starting to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The progress that pupils make in their writing and mathematics books is improving, particularly in upper key stage 2. School's own data and the work in pupils' mathematics and writing books show that pupils who receive the pupil premium make similar progress to other pupils in the school. However, in key stage 1 results for all pupils remain stubbornly low. This is where staffing changes have had a detrimental effect on pupils' learning. Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that there is more stability in staffing in Years 1 and 2.

The work in pupils' science and theme books continues to require improvement. The work is fact-based and offers little depth to pupils' learning beyond curriculum coverage. Where this is best, teachers promote pupils' understanding of content or skills development, such as in scientific investigations or pupils' map skills in geography. However, these pieces of work are few and far between.

Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning are variable in their effectiveness. They do not consistently provide teachers with feedback that will improve their teaching and learning. The best feedback for teachers provides a clear focus on developing teaching skills rather than commenting on the effectiveness of individual lessons or pieces of work.

Learning is most effective when tasks are well matched to pupils' different abilities. This is not always consistently applied. The quality of teaching and learning, as seen in pupils' work, is still variable between year groups. The work in books shows that the most able pupils do the same work as other pupils. These pupils are not provided with tasks that stretch their thinking, especially in writing. At times, their engagement in lessons fades because they are asked to sit through explanations of work that they can already do. Leaders have been successful in developing teachers' questioning skills. Some teachers ask pupils open-ended questions, which allows pupils to apply their reasoning skills, for example in Year 4 mathematics

where pupils justified their calculation methods to each other.

Leaders have identified that behaviour in lessons is an area for improvement. Although there were few instances of low-level disruption to lessons seen on the day of inspection, pupils commented that this can sometimes upset their learning. Pupils say that the work on growth mind-sets is working and helping them to improve their work and develop their pride in being part of the school. This is not yet reflected in the presentation of pupils' work, which is often scruffy. Pupils feel safe in the school because they feel that staff deal with bullying. Leaders have organised workshops for pupils and parents alike to raise awareness of the effects of bullying. Leaders are addressing this as part of the new school behaviour policy which is also rewarding good behaviour.

External support

The local authority has been proactive in brokering support from other schools as part of the local school-led system. This is starting to show positive signs of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The school also draws on external support from education consultants. This is providing leaders with clear guidance on how to improve aspects of school provision.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector