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21 March 2011

Mrs V Cobb and Mrs J Ireland  
The Executive Headteacher and the Acting Headteacher  
Chiddingly Primary School  
Muddles Green  
Chiddingly  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN8 6HN

Dear Mrs Cobb and Mrs Ireland

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Chiddingly Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 17 and 18 March 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex.

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart  
**Additional Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise achievement by:
  - improving attainment and accelerating pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics
  - improving pupils' attendance for those pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - eliminating inadequate teaching as a matter of urgency and ensuring the majority of lessons are good by improving the use of assessment to inform planning
  - providing a curriculum which clearly sets out the steps for teaching the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics in mixed-age classes
  - ensuring all work is carefully matched to all pupils' capabilities and builds on their existing skills.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels by:
  - developing more robust procedures and processes for self-evaluation and taking swift action to address underachievement
  - setting demanding targets and ensuring school improvement planning focuses on raising achievement
  - ensuring that senior and subject leaders have the skills, support and opportunities to improve the quality of teaching and learning
  - ensuring that governors robustly challenge and hold the school to account.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Chiddingly Primary School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 March 2011**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the acting headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been some significant changes. The local authority suspended the governing body's delegated powers over the school budget and introduced a management interim board to take charge temporarily of strategic management.

The headteacher resigned in 2009 and was replaced in an acting capacity by the then deputy headteacher, who subsequently retired in December 2010. The current deputy headteacher, who was in hospital during the visit, relinquished her post of responsibility in March 2011 in favour of concentrating on the role of class teacher. The local authority appointed a headteacher from a large primary school from a local town as executive headteacher and a deputy headteacher from another school as acting headteacher. The Years 3 and 4 teacher resigned at the end of the autumn term and was replaced by a temporary teacher on a two-term contract.

#### **Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning**

The new initiatives, which are the result of the school's renewed commitment to raising pupils' attainment, have yet to have full effect. Although information from school data shows that pupils are making more progress, most notably those who are more able, a variety of pupils continue to underachieve. In most cases, this is more to do to with gaps in previous learning than weaknesses in current provision. In all sessions observed, pupils behaved well and at least satisfactory relationships made learning possible. In Years 1 to 6, pupils showed enthusiasm and positive attitudes. They made the most of opportunities to gauge their own progress against personal targets and, in turn, compared these with those of their classmates. For example, in an effective Years 1 and 2 information and communication technology lesson, pupils made good progress in control techniques, eagerly working in groups to trace the fire-fighters' path through burning London. Years 5 and 6 pupils' explanations of the strategies being used to multiply two- and three-digit numbers demonstrated that the school has made good progress in linking literacy with numeracy skills.

Children in Reception continue to be attentive and to enjoy school, but their progress towards becoming independent learners, capable of making choices and

solving problems, is restricted by lack of opportunity. They are far too often inactive, and activities do not have an appropriate balance between those children might choose for themselves and those that are teacher directed.

Attendance has been improved through a more rigorous application of the criteria that need to be met for authorising absence. This represents satisfactory progress in improvement, but attendance is still almost two percentage points below average and a cause for concern.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement by:
  - improving attainment and accelerating pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics
  - improving pupils' attendance for those pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should – satisfactory.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Although not a central focus of this visit, it is clear that strengths in pupils' personal development have been sustained. Pupils continue to feel safe and act safely. Their good contribution to the school and local community has been maintained. The award in February of Enhanced Healthy Schools status is a testament to the impact of good provision from this point of view. Behaviour remains good even in less stimulating lessons. The introduction of school and class rules, that pupils have had an input into, is having a positive effect on social and moral development. Gaps in pupils' previous learning continue to have a restricting impact on pupils' future economic well-being.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

Observations made in lessons show that the quality of teaching still ranges from some aspects which are inadequate to a few that are good. Much better planning and more effective use of assessment data underpin improvements in the quality of teaching. Pupils know their targets in English and mathematics, and in the best marking, for example in Classes 2 and 4, teachers make reference to these to prompt further development. The impact of initiatives to improve teaching is variable in terms of pupils' progress. It is better when work is presented at different ability levels rather than setting all pupils the same task and expecting them to achieve to their full potential. For example, in a Years 3 and 4 lesson on the structure of written passages, more-able pupils were appropriately challenged and made sound progress, but the least able needed considerable support and, even then, were unsure of the relevance of the activity. Gaps in the learning of pupils in Year 1 have been tracked back by the school and officers of the local authority to aspects of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage which are clearly not as effective now as they were at the time of the last inspection.

Good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities frequently helps them to make good progress against the targets of their individual education plans. Such support is successfully extended with teaching assistants working with target groups to focus on skills, knowledge and understanding that will see pupils move up to the next level.

Improving the curriculum by making it more enjoyable and relevant features in the school's development planning. Satisfactory progress has been made in working towards ensuring that it builds systematically on what pupils know, can do and understand. This has gone hand in hand with the development of the use of assessment data which so far has focused on English and mathematics. There are positive signs that the renewed cross-curricular topic approach is benefiting learning, but the school is in the middle of the two-year cycle and has not evaluated the outcomes as yet.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - eliminating inadequate teaching as a matter of urgency and ensuring the majority of lessons are good by improving the use of assessment to inform planning
  - providing a curriculum which clearly sets out the steps for teaching the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics in mixed-age classes
  - ensuring all work is carefully matched to all pupils' capabilities and builds on their existing skills – satisfactory.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The newly established senior leadership team is having an outstanding impact on the school's development. The executive headteacher and the acting headteacher have galvanised staff and the governing body in their efforts to overcome the very serious weaknesses identified in the last report and have put the school back on the right track. They have introduced detailed strategic management plans that are well communicated, and have started to monitor the effectiveness of these against the criteria for success that have been clearly laid out. The overall impact on pupils' progress has yet to be seen, but the impact on staff morale and teachers' effectiveness in planning and developing their use of assessment is good. Self-evaluation is honest, accurate and robust. Senior leaders are well aware of the school's strengths and the priorities for improvement. Action planning in the strategic sense is good, very well supported by the local authority in terms of advice and finance. Members of the governing body are benefiting from specific training designed to enable them to challenge the school more effectively with regard to the impact of their decisions on pupils' achievement. They are much better informed and have already made satisfactory progress towards having delegated powers returned to them.

The roles of subject leaders have been defined and time and resources have been made available for them to manage their responsibilities. Progress in developing and implementing action plans to bring about improvement is good in some curriculum areas, for example in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. However, in some subjects such as religious education, modern foreign languages and in terms of the Early Years Foundation Stage, this process is at best adequate. Planning designed to bring about improvements to pupils' performance lacks detail, is not incisive enough, and does not give sufficient support to other members of staff.

Good monitoring by the senior leadership team, with strengths and areas for development identified, has improved the quality of some teaching but as yet not to the level required by the last report. It has been less effective at the lowest end of the school where there are still aspects of inadequate teaching. Nevertheless, progress against the area for development in what is effectively only a ten-week period is satisfactory.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and the school presents a safe, caring environment with provision much enhanced by teaching assistants and administrative staff who know pupils and families well. Pupils are well aware of who to turn to if they have a problem. Pastoral care continues to be well managed.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels by:
  - developing more robust procedures and processes for self-evaluation and taking swift action to address underachievement
  - setting demanding targets and ensuring school improvement planning focuses on raising achievement
  - ensuring that senior and subject leaders have the skills, support and opportunities to improve the quality of teaching and learning
  - ensuring that governors robustly challenge and hold the school to account
    - satisfactory.

### **External support**

The school is well supported by the local authority. A major success, fundamental to the progress being made, has been the temporary appointment of the executive and acting headteachers. Regular visits and the provision of training have benefited leadership and management, and served to enhance staff skills and understanding of pupils' learning. These have been complemented by the availability of good advice and practical support, particularly valuable in developing the management of assessment and core subject leadership.

The local authority statement of action is proving effective in mapping out the school's journey out of special measures. It contains appropriate time deadlines,

costings, and itemises responsibilities, while highlighting success criteria. It demonstrates a good partnership between the authority and the school.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the quality of learning opportunities for children in Reception by:
  - ensuring activities are rooted in good Early Years Foundation Stage practice
  - providing more opportunities to challenge children to be active, independent learners.