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3 November 2011

Mrs V Cobb - Executive Headteacher  
Mrs J Ireland - 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 with Jane Chesterfield, Additional Inspector, to your school on 2 November 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 third 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 is 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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.

### **Priority for further improvement identified during the first monitoring inspection**

- 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.

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

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 2 November 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, there has been a variety of important changes. The number of pupils on roll has declined and the school is now arranged in three, rather than four, mixed-age classes. The teacher who was on long-term sick leave has left and has been replaced by a member of staff seconded for a year from a local primary school. Another teacher has moved to a post elsewhere and a teacher has resigned with effect from the end of term. Her replacement has yet to be confirmed. The process of appointing a new headteacher has been completed and she will take up her post in January 2012 when the current acting headteacher will return to the school she has been seconded from. With the exception of one parent governor, whose appointment is imminent, the governing body is now complete.

The School Improvement Partner was replaced by a local authority link officer who has been working with the school since the start of this term.

Modifications to the building to create four distinct teaching areas and a library were completed during the summer holidays, along with considerable repairs to electrical systems damaged in the lightning strike which was a feature of the last monitoring visit. New inner boundary fencing at the front entrance of the school has been installed. A new caretaker and cleaner have very recently been employed.

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

Lesson observations and reference to school data indicate that pupils' attainment and progress are improving and that the trends evident in the last monitoring visit are being maintained. Variations still remain. These are very closely linked to the quality of teaching and how effectively assessment is used to match work to pupils' individual needs. National assessment results for 2011 show that attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was above average but, for the third year running, no boys achieved Level 5 in writing and in 2011 only one did so in mathematics.

Improvements to curriculum planning, which involves asking pupils what interests them as a starting point to learning, has increased enjoyment of lessons. A particularly good example was seen in a Years 4, 5 and 6 music lesson where

singing and performing in role was great fun. However, in some lessons, mundane activities leave pupils unchallenged. Ensuring that more- able pupils, particularly boys, always fulfil their potential remains an area for improvement.

Pupils' work, as seen in lessons and from their books, shows satisfactory progress overall. This is most notable in literacy which has been one of the school's priorities. There are some above-average examples of writing, for instance using information and communication technology to enhance descriptions and reported writing about life in Roman times. However, there is too little of pupils' work featured in displays around the school, and opportunities are missed to celebrate success and focus on what will raise attainment still further.

Progress since the last monitoring visit 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 – satisfactory.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Behaviour continues to be good even in lessons which are not particularly inspiring. Pupils show consideration for others, are polite and generally get on well with pupils and staff. They respond well to the family atmosphere of this small school.

Pupils show that they understand the need for rules in order to stay safe and healthy. They are keen to contribute to the school as a community, for example showing responsibility as school councillors and as playleaders. Previously identified strengths in personal, social and health education have been sustained.

Attendance has been improved from below to broadly average through better communication with parents and carers over expectations, despite a very small minority of unauthorised absences. The overwhelming majority of pupils are punctual and attend regularly.

Progress since the last monitoring visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve pupils' attendance for those pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should – satisfactory.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

A continuing weakness in teaching is that there are a minority of inadequate lessons at the end of Key Stage 1 and the beginning of Key Stage 2 where work is not well matched to pupils' ability, does not inspire pupils and where pace is too slow. However, there are highlights, for example as seen in a Years 4, 5, and 6 lesson exploring play scripts. Here, learning was good as a result of the knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm of the teacher. The overall quality of teaching has been sufficient to have raised attainment and enabled the majority of pupils to make

satisfactory progress. This is in no small part due to the part played by teaching assistants who effectively support pupils in and out of class. This particularly, but not exclusively, benefits pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who, in some cases, make better progress than their classmates.

Problems in the previously inadequate expertise in terms of the Early Years Foundation Stage have been overcome and there are some examples of good teaching, but there are still too few opportunities to learn through play as opposed to being directed by staff. Limited access to the outdoor space, and gaps in resources, continue to restrict aspects of physical development and children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

Pupils continue to be well cared for. Improvements to fencing are appreciated by pupils, parents and carers, and staff. Relationships are good at all levels and pupils know who to turn to when they have problems.

Progress since the last monitoring visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory
- improve the quality of learning opportunities for children in Reception – satisfactory.

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

The judgement concerning progress overall in terms of leadership and management is satisfactory. However, this includes continued good, and in the case of the management of change, outstanding, features in the way the executive headteacher and the acting headteacher lead the school. Their vision and ambition are well communicated and have been the driving force in getting the school to where it is now, having made good progress since going into special measures. Where there was a void, there are now processes and systems that provide a structure which can be built upon in the future. That the judgement in progress since the last monitoring visit is satisfactory, rather than good, is rooted in the way staff change has limited some aspects of subject and phase leadership and management. This is most obvious in terms of how outcomes and provision are monitored by subject leaders. A success story which provides a good model for development in other subjects is in literacy where the quality of teaching and learning has been improved through the work and example of the coordinator.

The governing body has made good progress in how it monitors and challenges the impact of provision, especially teaching, on pupils' outcomes. There is evidence of the governing body rigorously challenging senior staff to explain strategy, with positive effects on self-evaluation and forward planning. They are beginning to apply similar principles to other aspects, for example relating spending to pupils' learning and progress, but it is too soon for this to have had a marked impact on the underachievement of some pupils, for example the more able.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels – satisfactory.

### **External support**

The school continues to receive good support from the local authority. Amongst other initiatives, this takes the form of:

- extra funding to protect staffing and provide management time for the acting headteacher, as well as on-site support from an executive headteacher
- expert advice and training for staff in terms of the curriculum and its management
- strategic advice and guidance for the governing body and senior leaders.

This is proving effective in helping the school on its journey towards its aim of coming out of special measures. All concerned, local authority officers, the Chair of the Governing Body, executive headteacher and acting headteacher, agree with inspectors that the variety of recent changes and uncertainties over staffing mean that the school is not ready for this to happen.