

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 0117 3115319  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 0117 3150430  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) **Direct email:** matthew.parker@tribalgroup.com

7 March 2012

Mrs Helen Elliot  
The Headteacher  
Chiddingly Primary School  
Muddles Green  
Chiddingly  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN8 6HN

Dear Mrs Elliot

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

Following my visit with Gillian Bosschaert, Additional Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 March 2012, 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 fourth 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 – good.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 March 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit the acting headteacher has returned to the school she was seconded from. She was replaced in January 2012 by a permanent headteacher. The teacher of Years 2 and 3 left the school in December 2011 and has been temporarily replaced by a member of staff seconded from another school. She is also acting as assistant headteacher until April 2012. Reception and Year 1 continue to be taught by a seconded teacher and this is set to continue until the end of the summer term.

Governors have had their strategic powers, which were suspended when the school went into special measures, restored to them by the local authority and once more have control over finances. The executive headteacher still supports the school but now in the role of Local Leader of education.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Improved attainment and better progress were evident in November 2011. This was based on inspection evidence, national assessments and school records. No new information from national data is yet available but pupils' performance, as seen in lessons and supported by the school's ongoing assessment, has continued to improve. Some pockets of underachievement remain. This is most obvious in boys' writing and in the performance of some more able pupils, but even here there is improvement.

Changes in staffing and to the school's leadership are having positive effects with even more rigorous analysis of how well pupils are doing. The phonics (letters and sounds) programme is now firmly established in all three classes with a positive impact on reading and spelling. In a Years 4, 5, and 6 lesson, designed to improve writing skills, pupils used phonics effectively to sound out, and then interpret, new vocabulary. They successfully focused on antonyms and synonyms linked to the story of King Midas. This, together with the support of clear guidance about how to structure written accounts, enhanced pupils' ability to write creatively. Pupils of all abilities in this mixed age class made accelerated progress as a result.

In an improvement since November 2011, there are now examples of the school's continuing focus on the link between reading and writing in displays around the

building. Reception and Year 1 work on favourite toys, Years 2 and 3 raps from the rainforest, and Years 4, 5, and 6 Haiku poems show that pupils are enjoying experimenting with words. Such displays not only celebrate pupils' work, especially the boys, but also demonstrate that pupils are writing for a variety of purposes.

Discussions with staff, reference to pupils' progress records and first-hand observations indicate that improvements to pupils' basic mathematics skills, and how these are to be applied, are continuing. However, some pupils show a reluctance to try things out for fear of making mistakes. This restricts their problem-solving capability and their capacity for independent learning, and subsequently their progress. Staff agree with inspectors that this has its roots in pupils having had too few opportunities earlier in their school life to learn through first-hand activities and structured play. Planning to address this is in place and although there is still room for further development, particularly in terms of improving outdoor space, resources and access, those in Reception and Year 1 now have greater opportunities. This is laying a more secure foundation for the future.

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 – satisfactory.

### **The quality of teaching**

In a marked improvement over previous visits no inadequate lessons were observed and all teachers were seen teaching on several occasions. Improvements across the school, especially to the pace and challenge of learning, are being underpinned by robust and frequent monitoring. Teachers are acting upon feedback and benefiting from supporting each other. Improvements to planning ensure that work is set for different ability groups and in the more successful lessons provide extension activities for the more able.

Changes to staffing have led to notable improvements in the teaching in Years 2 and 3, where pupils are now challenged more appropriately for their ability and given more opportunities to enjoy learning. An example of this was in a literacy lesson where basic work on pronouns was made relevant and exciting by the prospect of subsequently writing letters to Quentin Blake to find out more about his work as an author and illustrator. Pupils of all abilities were enthused and responded well to praise and guidance by making accelerated progress.

The school's self-evaluation confirms inspection findings that the planned curriculum, despite covering basic requirements, does not bring out the best in pupils. This has resulted in too few pupils reaching above average levels and, historically, a general lack of enthusiasm. A radical rethink is in hand to devise plans that can link pupils' interests to themes which will present cross-curricular learning opportunities. For the youngest children this involves further development of learning through play and improving outdoor facilities and resources. For those in Key Stages 1 and 2 it includes providing more practical opportunities such as visits and role play. Such

initiatives are too new to have had a marked impact on pupils' achievement, but there are positive signs of improvement as a result of new initiatives. For example, a visit from a representative of a well-known supermarket chain to Reception and Year 1 raised a buzz of interest amongst pupils and staff and provided lots of meaningful follow-up opportunities.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – good.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Standards of behaviour have been sustained since the previous monitoring visit. The way in which pupils wholeheartedly joined in singing time, with older pupils setting an excellent example to younger ones, was a credit to the school.

Behaviour has been improved particularly in Years 2 and 3 because pupils have work which is more appropriately suited to their ability and is designed to be enjoyable. Expectations of behaviour in lessons and at play are made clear and pupils respond by showing that they care about the school and each other. Although the comments of one parent indicate disagreement, inspectors found no evidence of bullying of any kind and judge that the school has procedures in place that would address it if it ever did occur. Pupils and those parents and carers spoken to were keen to say that the school is a safe place and that staff look after pupils well. This is consistent with inspection findings.

Attendance has been systematically improved over the last year. In the current term it is consistent with the national average. With small year groups, where the absence of one pupil constitutes a high proportion of the total, this represents good improvement with positive implications for pupils' progress.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The school remains potentially vulnerable in that two out of the three classes are taught by teachers who are temporary. However, the new headteacher has already built upon the strengths which were noted in previous visits in the leadership and management. She has a clear vision for the future of the school. She sets aspirational and challenging targets and her ambition to eradicate underachievement is infectious. As a result, staff morale is high and there is a strong ethic of teamwork. Self-evaluation is accurate and development planning is prioritised to try to make the best use of time and resources to bring about improvements. Outstanding progress in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is paying off, with feedback being welcomed by staff and acted upon. Because of the very effective leadership shown by the headteacher, the target of developing the curriculum to support the quality of teaching is an aim enthusiastically shared by all class teachers. Satisfactory progress has been made in developing the roles of teachers as subject leaders, but this remains an area for further development.

The governing body is rightly proud to have had executive powers returned and continues to support the school enthusiastically. There is evidence that the impact of some decisions, for example with regard to the number of teaching assistant hours required, is being effectively evaluated in terms of pupils' attainment and progress. However, the monitoring of the way in which provision for special educational needs is managed has not addressed key weaknesses in the leadership of this area. Consequently, the best use of time and staffing has not been guaranteed and the leader has been insufficiently held to account. Nevertheless, the part the governing body plays in the overall strategic management of the school continues to improve. Better security, improved resources for information and communication technology and greater stability in staffing are testaments to this improvement.

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

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

### **External support**

The local authority continues to give the school good support. Appropriately this is now less obvious but nevertheless valuable. Advice and involvement in recruitment of staff and expert support, for example for mathematics and reading, ensure that progress is continual. The local leader of education visits the school regularly and is an effective sounding board for the headteacher and governors in establishing school review through self-evaluation. Independent of the inspection, the local authority, headteacher, governors and staff had rightly concluded that now was not the time for the school to come out of special measures, but were keen to demonstrate good progress in that direction.