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Mrs Melanie Clapton
Interim Headteacher
Chadwell St Mary Primary School
River View
Chadwell St Mary
Grays
Essex
RM16 4DH

Dear Mrs Clapton

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CHADWELL ST MARY
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 9 and 10 December 2008 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in July 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – *inadequate*

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – *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 governors and the Director of Education for Children, Education and Families for Thurrock.

Yours sincerely

George Falconer

Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Chadwell St Mary Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 December 2008

Evidence

HMI observed lessons, scrutinised documents and held discussions with the interim head teacher, seconded deputy headteacher, subject co-ordinators, staff, a group of pupils, the chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

The school staffing remains in a similar situation to the previous visit with the full complement of permanent staff still not secure. There is no substantive head teacher or deputy head teacher in post. There are three new teachers, not on permanent appointments, including one from overseas. The second interim executive chair of governors is new to the post since the previous visit was made but is not new to the governing body.

Achievement and standards

Key Stage 1 2008 unvalidated tests indicate that attainment in all subjects is below the national average by a large margin. Low reading and writing skills at Key Stage 1 impede pupils' progress in learning. Reading scores for KS1 pupils are well below the national averages; Writing at Key Stage 1 is the area where there is the largest gap in attainment between school and national data. Results in mathematics remain below the national averages, but not to the same degree as reading and writing.

The achievement of boys at Key Stage 1 is much lower than girls in school and much lower than boys nationally in all core subjects. Boys' reading and writing is well below the national average and much lower than those of the girls in the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities score lower than similar pupils nationally in reading and writing. The scores of pupils at school action plus are better than their national counterparts in mathematics. Pupils entitled to free school meals also perform less well than other pupils in the school and than similar pupils nationally. Overall test results at the end of Key Stage 1 are inadequate.

The 2007 validated Key Stage 2 results are very low compared to the national average, with both English and science being inadequate. English is the subject where pupils do least well, although boys' results narrowed the gap with the girls in school. Boys also scored better than girls in mathematics and science. Pupils on free school meals (FSM) score lower than their peers in English and science but higher than similar pupils nationally. Test results at the end of Key Stage 2 are inadequate overall.

Progress is mixed, with some pupils showing good progress whilst others are still struggling to make the appropriate amount of ground in order to move nearer to expected levels. Progress in lessons varies from good to satisfactory overall, but with some pupils making less than satisfactory progress in relation to their age-related targets. However the school produced evidence of the accelerated progress of some pupils as a result of well planned intervention strategies and good, focused group work led by both teachers and teaching assistants (TAs). The school has suffered in the past from high teacher turnover and this, coupled with some difficulties in recruitment, has contributed to a legacy of underachievement and poor test results. Pupils' progress is improving and the value that the school is now adding to pupils' learning as they move through the school is increasing.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science and accelerate the progress pupils make – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

Personal development and well being are areas of strength. It is very clear that pupils are proud of their school and are impressed by what it has to offer. They speak with passion about the teachers and all the staff who help them to develop. Pupils feel that there is a good atmosphere that is welcoming and geared up to offer better opportunities in learning. They note the difference in the way the curriculum is provided and say they enjoy the more practical approach to learning which makes learning easier and more interesting. There were certainly aspects of this approach, working successfully during the inspection visit. Classroom observations indicate that there are many pupils who enjoy their education but some still find it hard to concentrate and some occasionally distract others from learning. Pupils agree that most of them do behave well but there are some who misbehave from time to time. Attitudes to learning are generally positive and most pupils show a real willingness to learn. Attendance and punctuality for some pupils are still big issues for the school to resolve in partnership with the parents. Pupils who attend school say that they like being there because it is where they can see their friends and where they enjoy most of their lessons.

Beyond the classroom some take on responsibilities within their school community and enjoy helping others. There are library monitors who not only look after the books but also make the library more attractive and appealing for other pupils. Pupils also act responsibly as buddies and help younger pupils to mix with others.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve pupils' attendance – inadequate

Quality of provision

'Everyone does their bit to improve the school.' This statement was made at the meeting with pupils, who showed a good understanding of the way in which the school is working to improve, and of their own contribution. Teachers and teaching assistants work hard in this school to provide pupils with an education that will improve their life chances.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has undergone further development this term. Both the indoor and outdoor curriculum are organised to give pupils a good mix of activities organised around the six areas of learning. Teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are satisfactory overall but with lessons seen ranging from satisfactory to good with some elements being very good.

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but with some good examples of teaching that generate interest and enthusiasm for learning. There were no inadequate lessons seen during the visit. Classroom observations indicate that there are many pupils who enjoy their education and find it relevant but there are also some who still find it hard to concentrate, particularly where the work is not as well matched to pupils' abilities.

In good lessons, the relationship between teachers and pupils is very positive and this gives rise to good levels of confidence in the majority of pupils, who display very positive attitudes and an enthusiasm to learn and to do their best. Pupils are aware of their targets for improvement. The teaching is based on good levels of planning, which includes activities well matched to pupils' needs and good use of day to day assessment. Pupils can talk knowingly and sensibly about their progress as well as about those areas of learning that they still find difficult. There is a spirit of co-operation and pupils work well together. Support from the teaching assistants is suitably focused.

Where the teaching and learning is satisfactory, planning is not as focused on pupils' needs. Pupils are not always engaged in their learning and the pace is not brisk enough. Responses to teachers' questions are not always forthcoming and the progress made by some pupils is sometimes not enough. Basic classroom management processes including behaviour management and the structure of learning are not always as well developed. Work in exercise books is not always accurate or well presented, but the quality of marking to help pupils move forward has improved a good deal since the previous visit.

Assessment for learning is developing well but is often seen as an exercise to carry out at the end of a lesson rather than it being an integral part of the lesson itself, purposefully planned to offer the teacher an opportunity to focus in on specific areas of learning or difficulty in learning. Teaching assistants are generally well deployed and show enthusiasm as well as enjoyment in their work.

The curriculum is satisfactory, developing well and is currently being revised to generate a skills based approach which will afford a platform for designing thematic work for pupils to study. Pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 enjoy spending some of their learning time at the Gateway Academy where they are involved in several very interesting activities. As an example, Year 6 is currently working on Romeo and Juliet at their own school and are about to produce their own 'Garage Music' in relation to their work at the Gateway Academy. All pupils involved are very excited about the prospect.

Care guidance and support are satisfactory in some areas with levels of academic guidance and support improving as staff gain more confidence in gauging progress that pupils make. Systems for child protection are current and regularly updated, as are procedures for health and safety. The school and the LA are currently in the process of reviewing the perimeter of the school in order to make the school as secure as possible.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the provision in the Foundation Stage – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the interim head teacher are strong and give a good steer to the school. This has recently been enhanced by the addition of a seconded deputy head teacher. Together, they are keeping a close watching brief on pupils' progress, as well as developing strategies for raising standards.

Middle managers are working hard to develop their skills and ideas which they are now beginning to share more with staff. There is recognition, however, of the need to stay focused on the main priorities for development and not to attempt too many initiatives. More support is being given to the staff in order to raise the quality of teaching and learning and those processes of assessment for learning, monitoring, planning and evaluating which are central to the school's capacity to improve. The school has an accurate view of how far it has travelled in relation to its goals. Work with external agencies has continued apace and the school works well with visiting consultants in order to raise the achievement of all pupils.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Stabilise staffing and improve the quality of teaching, ensuring that assessment information is used effectively – sound progress in teaching and learning and the use of assessment for learning but staffing is not yet stable.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management of the headteacher, senior teachers and the governing body – satisfactory

External support

External support continues to be focused on the priorities for improvement. It is gradually having a degree of impact in some areas, more notably in leadership and management and the access staff have to external professional development. Teaching and learning is gradually improving as a result and staff are becoming more confident in their work. The local authority are giving good levels of support through regular advisory and monitoring visits which enable the school to gain that important external perspective on progress made.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and science by focusing particularly on reading and writing across the subjects for all pupils.
- Develop middle leadership so that it has a more focused and strategic role across the school
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to good in most lessons by enabling staff to access models of good practice, coaching, and focused training, with specific reference to a greater understanding of the use of assessment.
- Improve attendance by increasing levels of parental involvement in learning opportunities and thus improving positive relationships.