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Mrs Melanie Clapton
Interim Headteacher
Chadwell St Mary Primary School
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Chadwell St Mary
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Dear Mrs Clapton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Chadwell St Mary Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 9 July 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth 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 – Satisfactory

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 Children's Services for Thurrock.

Yours sincerely
George Falconer

Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Chadwell St Mary Primary School.

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 July 2009.

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and staff, the chair of the interim executive board, local authority representatives, the director of the excellence cluster, a senior representative from a link school and a group of pupils.

Context

The decision on the future of the school is that it will remain open. Initial steps have been taken for the school to work towards a 'hard federation' with another local school. There is no substantial development on this issue at this time. The interim headteacher is leaving at the end of the summer term. The seconded deputy headteacher is also leaving. There is no current plan for a substantive headteacher to be appointed to Chadwell St Mary Primary School.

Achievement and standards

The 2008 test data for the school depicts progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 as below the national average in English, mathematics and science; more notably in mathematics. However, results over time suggest that the school is making some progress in raising attainment. The picture of low and varying attainment over the last three years is partially linked to the ability of children on intake to the Early Years Foundation Stage, with many of them not having experienced nursery school.

The pupil group that took the 2008 Key Stage 1 tests was smaller than in previous years. The 2008 test results for pupils at the end of the key stage show pupils' attainment in all subjects well below the national average with writing being much weaker than mathematics and weaker than reading. The 2008 cohort of pupils taking the test numbered nearly twice as many boys as girls with the boys attaining well below boys nationally, particularly in writing. This is in spite of the school's efforts to provide a curriculum which appeals to both girls and boys. Variation in attainment amongst different groups of pupils is evident.

Attainment at Key Stage 2 in the 2008 results show the school to be performing well below the national average in English, mathematics and science but with English being better than the other two subjects. Girls in school scored higher than boys in English, mathematics and science, but both boys and girls do less well than pupils nationally. Variation in attainment amongst the groups of pupils at Key Stage 2 is evident.

Current progress in activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good with accelerated progress in all areas. Some good work is being done here. Current progress in the whole school is satisfactory overall with the majority of pupils enjoying their learning and make satisfactory progress, often from low starting points. Evidence indicates that a good percentage of pupils are now making accelerated progress.

The school's data for 2009 for Key Stage 1 indicates improvement in reading and mathematics but less so in writing. Key Stage 2 school indicators for the current time show that pupils have improved only marginally in English and mathematics. The positive strategies put in place to improve writing, including drama, are gradually impacting on the quality of writing. As a result, children are more enthusiastic to write extended pieces as evidenced in 'Big Write' books. Bigger improvements have been made in science.

All groups are now tracked individually with half termly progress checks. The school information currently shows some differences in attainment among groups of pupils but there is also evidence of some pupils reaching higher levels in English and mathematics, which was not always the case in previous years.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science and accelerate the progress pupils make:

Inadequate progress in raising standards in English and mathematics but the progress pupils make is generally satisfactory with evidence of a good percentage of pupils making accelerated progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils enjoy school and the majority enjoy their lessons. They feel safe, secure and happy at school where every attempt is made to meet individual needs. Teachers know the pupils well and pupils feel that their comments and views are listened to and acted upon. Behaviour is generally satisfactory with only a minority of pupils showing signs of misbehaviour in class. Outside the classroom, pupils state that behaviour is 'alright' with any misbehaviour being dealt with promptly. The school is well resourced for physical activities and many of the pupils take advantage of sports and team games, helping them to lead healthy lifestyles and to engage in social activities.

Attendance remains an issue for the school but with current data showing improvements on figures from earlier in the year. The school continues with its many initiatives to increase levels of attendance of the poor attendees, including early morning sports activities. The initiative to develop secure relationships with the parents from an early stage is beginning to take hold. One such example is the parent/child workshops, where parents are invited to come into school to work



alongside the children on set topics. The initiative is generating understanding of schooling as well as enjoyment for both parents and children.

Attitudes to learning are generally positive and pupils state that they are very appreciative of what the adults in school do to support them. School makes sure that the pupils understand the importance of adopting safe practices, both in school and in the community where they continue to support charitable events.

Pupils are developing a variety of skills that will satisfactorily contribute to their future lives and to their future economic well being. Discussion with pupils indicates that they are highly appreciative of the recent developments in the quality of some lessons and the way in which the curriculum is more creative and stimulating. Many of them welcome the increased level of resources for information and communication technology.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve pupils' attendance - Satisfactory

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to good in the course of the inspection. This is a school where the majority of pupils enjoy their learning. The strong team work and the collegiate approach of the staff in moving the school forward is positively impacting on teaching and learning and the curriculum. The staff work very hard to promote positive social and academic experiences for pupils.

The environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. It is conducive to learning with a good range of teacher led and child-initiated activities giving purpose and variety. The well thought out external learning environment provides for a good range of physical, social and academic activities with good support from the teaching assistants. Children are eager to share their new-found knowledge and can talk about their work. For example, the nurturing of their caterpillars to butterflies, complete with a video of when they were set free. The topic on mini beasts is particularly well resourced and this helps the children's understanding. They are learning to use their powers of observation as well as developing the skill of raising questions in science. Provision for individuals and groups is good. Children's progress is monitored and tracked regularly. Assessment of learning is stronger and systems for referring to information are more robust and accessible.

The curriculum across the school is becoming more appropriate and interesting. Some lessons are planned to develop pupils' interests in different and imaginative ways. Pupils are responding well to a broader curriculum approach and to taking the initiative as more responsibility is given to them.

They speak positively about their different interests and about how the improved quality of teaching is improving their understanding. Speaking and listening is

actively encouraged in lessons and pupils in Key Stage 2 are more aware of being able to use numeracy and literacy in a variety of curriculum areas. They are also well aware of their targets. Subjects such as design and technology are more prominent in the curriculum than in previous visits and links across the curriculum are adding meaning to learning.

Teaching now plans for differences in ability in a school that is working hard to be inclusive. Assessment of pupils' progress is becoming more accurate overall with assessment for learning more widely practised. However, in some lessons pupils can be observed working at a slow pace or with too much teacher directed time allocated to the lesson. This does not give pupils the opportunity to become engaged in the learning as much as they could be. The quality of marking is still variable but with increasing examples of good marking that engages the pupils in thoughts on how to improve.

The quality of care is good and guidance and support are developing well as teaching staff become more aware and more confident in matching the levels of work to the abilities of the pupils in reading and writing. Staff are aware of the need to develop similar skills of assessment in mathematics and science.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well cared for and the school recognises the positive journey it has made towards becoming more inclusive. An up to date single central record is maintained and child protection procedures are regularly reviewed.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the provision in the Foundation Stage – Good

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of the interim headteacher continue to be good. Staff are well led and managed. The focus on specific issues for school improvement is helping staff to reflect on their practice and to develop new or different approaches to teaching and learning. Increased confidence of the teachers to deliver at least satisfactory lessons is growing and they talk freely of areas where they have strengths as well as where they still need to develop. The school-wide leadership team is taking more of a critical perspective on the achievement of pupils in relation to the quality of teaching and curriculum and realises that there is more to be done to improve pupils' achievement across the school.

Self-evaluation is more accurate as the leadership continues to drive for better pupil progress and higher levels of attainment. The chair of the interim executive board takes a keen interest in developments and asks the right questions of the school leadership. He is very keen to secure the best education possible and is increasing the level of contact with external bodies such as the excellence cluster.

The current interim head teacher is due to leave the school at the end of the term. The interim deputy head teacher is also leaving. There are no substantive replacements but it is anticipated that another interim leader will be appointed for September. No details are finalised at this time.

The appointment of a substantive leader for the school is seen as urgent, given the school's current position on its journey of improvement. Since going into special measures many improvements have been brought about. This momentum needs to be sustained. The chair of the interim executive board is working hard to secure an arrangement for the coming term and shares the concerns of the inspection with reference to the stability for pupils at Chadwell St Mary.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management of the head teacher, senior teachers and the governing body – Satisfactory
- Stabilise staffing and improve the quality of teaching ensuring that assessment information is used effectively – Satisfactory at this stage but the school is soon to be without the current interim headteacher and seconded deputy headteacher.

External support

External support is provided from a number of sources including a local school, the excellence cluster and various consultants. The external support is helping the school to develop its self awareness in addition to its further strategies for school improvement. The school is becoming adept at seeking out resources suited to particular development priorities.

The local authority is working on the potential for Chadwell St Mary Primary School to become federated with another school. This is still in the early stages of development. Initial discussions have taken place. It is stated that the process is to be continued in the next academic year.

Priorities for further improvement

- Make sure that there is continued, strong leadership in place for the autumn term and that plans for a federation are shared and implemented as soon as possible.
- Make sure that the quality of teaching and learning is improved upon across the year groups and that existing good practice is shared.
- Develop enhanced understanding of assessment for learning in mathematics.
- Develop further approaches for encouraging regular attendance so that it keeps abreast of the national average.