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Miss Lesley Chapman
Acting Headteacher
Morden Mount Primary School
Lewisham Road
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Dear Miss Chapman

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 February 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass my thanks to the pupils, middle leaders, governors and School Improvement Partner.

Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils attending the school has fallen. There have been changes to staffing and the organisation of classes. Some pupils are now taught in mixed-age classes. The headteacher is on sick leave and the deputy headteacher is now acting headteacher, supported by a member of the senior leadership team who is acting deputy headteacher. Four newly qualified teachers joined the school in September and two teachers left at the end of the autumn term. Two classes are being taken by supply teachers and one year group experienced a number of changes of supply teachers last term. There have also been changes to the governing body. The school's budget is in deficit.

As a result of the inspection on 26 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise pupils' achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science
- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that lessons are consistently challenging, interesting and fun for the pupils
- strengthen the roles of middle managers, so that they are more accountable for standards, achievement and the support given to pupils learning English as an additional language.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Standards remain exceptionally low and targets for 2008 were missed at the end of Year 6. Standards also fell at the end of Year 2 in 2008. The school is tracking the progress that pupils make and analysing the information to identify those who are at risk of not reaching the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Additional support is beginning to have some impact on accelerating the progress that these pupils are making but too many inconsistencies remain, for example in the progress pupils make in writing and through Key Stage 2. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make inconsistent progress because their needs are not met well in lessons. Assessment of science is not developed, with the result that the school is unable to evaluate accurately the progress pupils are making in this subject. Older pupils know the levels they are working at and have targets for improvement in literacy but not in mathematics or science. Although the focus has been on ensuring that pupils reach the levels expected for their age in literacy and numeracy, expectations are not high enough of those who can attain better.

Steps have been taken to eradicate inadequate teaching but some still remains. The progress pupils make is not being accelerated fast enough and is inconsistent because lessons are not providing sufficient challenge and pace to motivate and engage all learners. Pupils continue to say, 'Work is too easy and we would like more to do.' Some report that teachers have responded to this by saying, 'Give the others a chance.' Although planning generally identifies varied activities for pupils of different abilities, assessment information is not used effectively to match these well to pupils' needs. Too often, pupils are given the same work to do. There are weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge. This results in pupils not being given appropriate guidance or support in lessons, or in their books, to correct misconceptions and help them improve. Teaching assistants support specific groups of pupils but the quality of this support varies and is not planned for carefully, particularly during whole-class activities. Pupils generally behave well and are keen to take part. They are given good opportunities to discuss their ideas together. They enjoy the use of role play and the variety of resources that are used to make learning more interesting. However, these are not always well matched to the objective of the lesson or carefully focused to maintain the pace of learning.

The role of middle leaders is being strengthened. They have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities and share the senior leaders' vision, which is rightly focused on raising standards and achievement. They are involved in monitoring their subjects and offer support and guidance to staff, including the delivery of whole-staff training. They discuss the progress that pupils are making but this is not yet sufficiently embedded to ensure consistency in the quality of support, teaching and learning for all pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language. They have developed plans for improving their subjects but are not specific about how these are to be evaluated so that more rapid progress is made in closing the gaps in pupils' learning.

The local authority's support of middle leaders is helping them to develop the skills they need to contribute to the school's improvement. They report that they are

increasingly involved and so feel empowered to make changes. However, the impact of local authority support on standards, achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning has been limited. Some necessary revisions have been made to the local authority's statement of action. However, it still lacks clear, quantifiable milestones against which to check that the progress being made by the school is fast enough. Governors are not sufficiently involved in evaluating, with the local authority, that sufficient progress is being made in addressing the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, and so are not challenging the pace of improvement.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector