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Mrs M Fenniche
Headteacher
Downsview Community Primary School
Beech Avenue
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Dear Mrs Fenniche

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils who gave up their lunch break to talk to me.

A new executive headteacher has been in post since 1 September following the retirement of the previous headteacher. There have also been changes to the teaching staff. The school is receiving support from a group of schools headed by the Kemnal Academy.

As a result of the inspection on 23 June 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The previous inspection followed the publication of 2008 national examination results which showed the school to be improving. However, attainment and progress both fell back after this. In 2009 results in English, mathematics and science were low and pupils made poor progress between Key Stages 1 and 2, placing the school in the bottom 3% of schools nationally. Unvalidated results for 2010 show some improvement in Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics where the proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 was similar to that found nationally in 2009. Unlike the previous year, in 2010 a small minority of pupils gained Level 5 in English and in mathematics. However, results in Key Stage 1 deteriorated further. The quality of pupils' writing in both key stages is weak. Overall, pupils' attainment and progress are worse than was found at the time of the last inspection. The school was unable



to demonstrate any improvement in achievement in science, despite this being a key area for improvement in the last inspection report.

During the monitoring inspection, the quality of teaching observed was inadequate in four out of five lessons, showing a worsening position to that found during the previous inspection. Behaviour in lessons was good and well managed by teachers. Common weaknesses in teaching included a lack of clarity and detail in planning. Learning objectives rarely focused on learning but were rather a description of activities drawn from an 'off the shelf scheme'. This resulted in the needs of different ability groups not being considered carefully enough. As a consequence, high attainers wasted time by completing undemanding tasks quickly, while less-able pupils found difficulty starting tasks that they did not understand. Often this was not picked up until the teacher came to individual pupils. On some occasions explanations were unclear and understanding went unchecked so that no pupils were able to engage in the task. The use of teaching assistants was not managed well. They were often unclear about what they should be doing. The quality of marking was variable. In the best instance, pupils' books contained helpful comments. In others, however, although only a few pieces of work had been completed at this stage of term, none had been marked to help pupils gauge their early progress.

There appears to have been no action to develop the role of subject leaders in order to improve the consistency of teaching and raise achievement, until two weeks ago when new subject leaders were appointed jointly with the executive headteacher's other school. While appointments have now been made it is too soon to see any impact.

The school has worked hard to improve attendance and there is some evidence of successful impact. However, the number of absences remains above average and above the school's target.

The new executive headteacher has a clear understanding of what needs to be done. She has already begun to make expectations clear to teachers, for example instigating a planned cycle of lesson observations to inform performance management and planning meetings to hold teachers accountable for the progress of their pupils. However, these plans have yet to be implemented. Overall, current leadership and management structures rely too heavily on the expertise of the executive headteacher, for example in safeguarding. Child protection procedures have recently improved. Since the beginning of this month, the day-to-day running of the school has been enhanced by assistance from a group of schools coordinated by the Kemnal Trust. This has greatly supported the executive headteacher. The group is also providing additional personnel to strengthen the quality of teaching, particularly in English, but again it is too early in term for this to be fully in place and show impact. Until very recently the governing body and the local authority have lacked the information to hold the school to account. This is now improving.



The monitoring inspection has raised very serious concerns regarding the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress which may affect the timing of the next inspection. As a matter of urgency the school should:

- raise attainment overall and especially in writing and in science
- embark on a programme of professional development for teachers and implement the monitoring arrangements so that inadequate teaching is quickly eradicated and some lessons become good, so that pupils' progress accelerates
- further increase the capacity of managers to ensure that the leadership of teaching and learning does not rely exclusively on the executive headteacher.

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

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2009

- raise achievement and standards in science, particularly in Years 3 to 6
- develop the role of subject leaders in order to improve the consistency of teaching and raise achievement
- build on work done with families to reduce the number of persistent absentees.