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20 April 2012

Mrs V Sian  
Lead Headteacher  
Walkley Primary School  
Burnaby Crescent  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
S6 2RZ

Dear Mrs Sian

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Walkley Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 April 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. I would especially like to thank staff and pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority officer who gave their time at short notice to meet with me.

There have been a number of changes since the last inspection. The headteacher left at short notice at the end of the autumn term 2011. The local authority was able to secure the services of an effective lead headteacher for the spring term 2012. On his departure they have appointed an equally effective and experienced replacement lead headteacher from April 2012. The local authority is committed to funding this role until a substantive headteacher is appointed to the school. An experienced governor has taken over as Chair of the Governing Body and around one third of governors are new to the school. An experienced phase leader for Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage left at the end of the spring term 2012 and governors are about to appoint a replacement.

As a result of the inspection on 5 October 2011, 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 is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Immediately following the last inspection, senior leaders, in conjunction with the assessment leader, worked effectively to devise and implement more robust systems for tracking pupils' attainment and progress. As a result of this more efficient and accurate system, the school is now able to gauge rates of progress and achievement for all pupils, regardless of their starting points, length of time in the school or additional needs. This information is closely linked to the outcomes of lesson observations so that the level of accountability of all teachers for the achievement of pupils has improved immensely. Consequently, there has been an impressive improvement in the rates of progress pupils are making so that gaps

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identified at the time of the last inspection are closing at a rapid rate. This is most notable in tackling the trend of underperformance among White British girls, particularly during Key Stage 2. The progress of pupils with a disability or who have special educational needs and those new to learning English is improving due to better identification of their needs, carefully targeted support in class and individual interventions where necessary. Some pupils, particularly in Year 6, show an increasing understanding of where they are in their learning and what they need to do to improve further thanks to more effective marking by teachers. Targets for achievement are challenging, with indications that Year 6 pupils are rapidly closing the gap between their achievement and that found nationally, particularly in English. Handwriting is taught systematically across the school and pupils take pride in both the presentation of their work and the precision of their spelling and grammar, which are increasingly accurate. Opportunities to write for a variety of audiences ensure that pupils are now more aware of the purposes of writing.

The quality of teaching is improving because senior leaders ensure that there are high-quality coaching and mentoring opportunities which share the existing good practice across the school. The local authority has recognised the effectiveness of this programme and has committed funding for the initiative to continue for the next term. For their part, individual teachers are benefiting from increased opportunities for professional development. Effective practitioners in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 willingly share their exemplary teaching skills with their colleagues. Consequently, the school is able to show significant success stories in improving the classroom practice for a number of teachers who demonstrate more consistently the features of good teaching. For example, a common planning format clearly identifies appropriate and increasingly challenging activities for pupils based on thorough and accurate assessments of their needs. Key concepts are identified within the planning and teachers ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to put these into practice during lessons. Senior leaders recognise that there is still work to be done to ensure consistency in behaviour management and to improve the pace at which lessons proceed to consolidate the proportion of good or better teaching.

After a faltering start in October 2011, the school is now firmly on track and making significant inroads into tackling the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. With effective support from the local authority, the transition from the first lead headteacher to the second has, in the words of a substantive senior leader, been 'seamless'. Senior leaders in the school during the last inspection were active during a period of uncertainty in the latter part of the autumn term. They rose to the challenge of the notice to improve and worked unstintingly in overhauling the assessment and tracking systems so that they were fit for purpose. Of particular note was the work they undertook in analysing the underlying reasons behind the underachievement of the White British girls. Through a sequence of pupil interviews, lesson observations and data scrutiny they were able to present their findings to the new leader at the start of the spring term 2012. This ensured that the lead headteacher in January 2012 was able immediately to commence work on raising levels of accountability for pupils' progress and specifically tackle the underachievement of White British girls. Consequently, the gap between their achievement and that found nationally is closing rapidly and, for some older girls in the group, is higher than expected. The role of

the governing body has been strengthened, although the school recognises that more needs to be done to ensure that governors have the knowledge and skills to challenge as well as support the work of the school.

The local authority is providing effective and consistent support and challenge to the school, particularly in helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Its statement of action is fit for purpose. The impact of the local authority action plan is evident not only in the rates of improvement but also in the consistency of leadership from the first lead headteacher to the next. This has ensured that the school's capacity for improvement has not suffered as a consequence and remains firmly on track.

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

James Kilner  
Her Majesty's Inspector



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2011.**

- Further improve pupils' achievement so that their attainment rises and the gaps that exist between pupils' attainment and national age-related expectations, particularly in English, close more quickly and securely by:
  - improving pupils' grammar and punctuation and enabling them to practise and reinforce their writing skills across the curriculum more frequently
  - ensuring the academic distance travelled by pupils between Key Stages 1 and 2 matches or exceeds challenging targets based on their starting points and capabilities.
  
- Build on the improvements already secured to further advance the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress by:
  - ensuring all teaching enables pupils to develop their understanding of key concepts, knowledge and skills more securely and quickly
  - ensuring the most effective practice in the school is shared and becomes embedded as the norm
  - sharpening the precision of individual pupils' writing targets and reaffirming the core expectations for high-quality writing.
  
- Build on the improvements already secured to further increase the impact of leaders and managers in tackling the school's remaining key issues by:
  - reviewing the efficiency of current strategies and refining practice where necessary to accelerate the pace of change
  - strategically and urgently tackling the trend of underperformance among White British girls, particularly during Key Stage 2.