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Mr S Sales, acting headteacher
Ms W Todd, associate headteacher
Walton Oak Primary School
Ambleside Avenue
Walton-on-Thames
KT12 3LN

Dear Mr Sales and Ms Todd

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Walton Oak Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 October 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection.

The headteacher began a period of leave in the summer term owing to ill health, and the deputy headteacher became acting head in May. The school is supported by an experienced associate headteacher. Four new teaching colleagues took up their posts at the start of the new school year.

As a result of the inspection on 26–27 January 2010, 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.

The outcomes of the 2010 Early Years Foundation Stage pupil profile confirm that the youngest pupils often make good progress from a wide variety of starting points. The provisional results of the 2010 Key Stage 1 teacher assessment were moderated by the local authority. The assessment process was robust and revealed that some of the inconsistencies in Key Stage 1 pupil progress, highlighted by the inspection report, remain.

The provisional results of the 2010 Key Stage 2 national tests were more positive than in recent years and show improvements in both English and mathematics. As a result, pupil progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is likely to be close to the local and national average for the first time in recent years. In light of these positive developments the governing body and the local authority have increased the 2011

Key Stage 2 targets. A scrutiny of the pupils' work in Years 5 and 6 was compared with the robust assessment evidence base being developed by the school. This indicates that many pupils have started the new school year positively and that standards are continuing to rise.

HMI conducted 12 joint observations of teaching with the senior team. In a formal review of the quality of learning observed, the views expressed by the school's senior staff concurred with the judgments given by HMI. Learning was found to be good in nine of the 12 lessons. In the best lessons, questioning was well directed and gave time for the pupils to respond. Good use was made of 'talk partners' to encourage discussion and engaging tasks provided appropriate challenge. In the best lessons, teaching assistants and class teachers worked as an efficient team. The timing of some lessons lacked precision; as a result, some opportunities to enhance challenge or to create a link to the next area of learning were missed.

Significant improvement has been secured in the pupils' attendance. Effective policies and procedures have seen figures rise by over 2% in the year. When the figures for September 2009 are compared with the recent data from the same period in 2010, it is evident that attendance levels across the school have improved by 3.4% and are currently above the national average.

Ofsted reviewed the local authority statement of action which detailed the support to be provided to the school. As a result, amendments were required to: identify who would be responsible for leading and monitoring each action; and to provide appropriate success criteria. The revisions made were fit for purpose and the support provided has contributed positively to the improvements secured. The evaluations provided by the School Improvement Partner have been accurate and have helped the senior staff to move the school forward. Similarly, the work of the associate headteacher, has provided strong strategic direction.

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

Yours sincerely

David Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2010

- Accelerate pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science so that it is at least in line with national expectations by July 2011 by:
 - eliminating the current inconsistencies in progress between classes and year groups in Years 1 to 6
 - embedding the recently introduced arrangements to involve teachers more fully in checking pupils' progress each half-term and taking prompt action to tackle early signs of underachievement.

- Improve attendance to satisfactory levels (94% or higher) and reduce the proportion of persistent absentees to at least national average levels by July 2011 by:
 - working very closely with the families of persistent absentees to ensure they appreciate the impact of poor attendance on their children's learning and progress
 - taking firm action, in liaison with external agencies, to deal with poor attendance
 - seeking further ways to encourage good attendance and develop pupils' enthusiasm for coming to school.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by December 2010 by:
 - ensuring all teachers plan activities that promote a good pace of learning and build effectively on previous learning for all groups of pupils
 - identifying the specific learning that teachers intend to take place in each lesson and explaining this very clearly to pupils at the outset
 - involving pupils in checking how well they have understood new learning during and at the end of lessons
 - ensuring that pupils are given consistently high quality oral and written feedback that shows them the next steps in learning.