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11 March 2011

Dr S Gater
Headteacher
Walker Technology College
Middle Street
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE6 4BY

Dear Dr Gater,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Walker Technology College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 March 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

Since the previous inspection, a deputy headteacher has become the designated headteacher because the head is retiring. The school is moving to a new building in September 2011. Structures are changing to reflect the new start, for example three internal schools with new staffing arrangements have been created. The governing body structure has changed with new committees and more involvement of students in the work of governors.

As a result of the inspection on 12 October 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Students are achieving more highly and attainment is rising. The starting point in Year 7 continues to be low and they are making more rapid progress as they move through the school. The number of students who gained five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics improved from 31% in 2009 to 41% in 2010. Inspection evidence confirms the school is on track to meet the target of 52% in 2011. Learning and progress are more consistently good across a wider range of subjects, for example, mathematics, religious education and science. Attainment in mathematics has significantly improved as a result of a sharply focussed drive for improvement and the restructuring of the department including the addition of an advanced skills teacher post. The number of students gaining A* to C in mathematics rose from 34% in 2009 to 47.6% in 2010. The 2011 target of 52% has already been met through early entry to examinations.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Specialist status in technology and the visual arts is making a positive impact and helping to improve the school's performance. For example, all students studying art in 2010 gained GCSE A* to C grades, which was well above the national average. Specialist targets in technology were met in 2009. The school has taken effective action to improve a shortfall in 2010 and the 2011 results are predicted to exceed the target.

Attendance has improved, although it remains below average. Links with parents, carers, partner primary schools and outside agencies have been strengthened and extensive strategies are in place to continue the upward trend. The number of students who are persistently absent has reduced from 11.8% to 8.6% as a result of initiatives such as employing a second education welfare officer as a member of staff.

The quality of teaching has improved, largely as a result of sharing best practice. Inspection evidence confirms the school's evaluation that the proportion of good and better teaching has increased. Assessment information is used more effectively when matching work to students' needs. The school is taking appropriate action to deliver feedback consistently to students on how to improve their work in all subjects.

The quality of leadership and management has been strengthened at all levels. Subject leaders are held more rigorously to account for students' progress and any underachievement is quickly dealt with. The local authority has effectively helped to drive school improvement, for example, through consultants. The School Improvement Partner has worked closely with senior leaders and has provided effective challenges in order to move the school forward.

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

Mr Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment further by ensuring that learning and progress are consistently good across a wider range of subjects, including mathematics.
- Ensure that attendance improves by further strengthening links with parents and carers, feeder schools and outside agencies to reduce the percentage of students who are persistently absent.
- Improve the quality of teaching across the school by sharing best practice to ensure that:
 - assessment data is used more consistently so work is closely matched to students' needs
 - students receive regular written feedback on their work which is constructive and helps them to know exactly what they need to do to move from one level to the next
 - students are encouraged to be involved more actively in their learning, to assess their own performance and to learn independently.