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Mr Van Straaten
Headteacher
Wilberforce Primary School
Beethoven Street
London
W10 4LB

Dear Mr Van Straaten

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Wilberforce Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 November 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your staff, to your senior leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Head of Commissioning, School Standards from the local authority.

At the time of the last inspection the school was led by an interim headteacher and a governing body. In September 2012 a new headteacher joined the school and an Interim Executive Board replaced the governing body. New staff joined in September 2012 including two new assistant headteachers, one with leadership responsibility for reading and one responsible for mathematics. One of the deputy headteachers is currently on maternity leave and a deputy headteacher joined the school on a fixed term contract for maternity cover. A new leader for inclusion was appointed. The school is currently in the process of consultation to become an academy.

As a result of the inspection on 15 and 16 March 2012, 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 satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

In recent years few pupils from Year 1 through to Year 6 have made the amount of progress expected of pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 have been very low for some time. The school's results for 2012 show improvement, especially in Key Stage 1. For the first time in five years pupils reached standards broadly in line with those found nationally for reading and writing, and in mathematics pupils' achievement rose to

just above the national average. By contrast, standards in Key Stage 2 remain low but are better than 2011.

The impact of a legacy of weak teaching in Key Stage 2 means that some pockets of slower pupil progress remain. The limited progress of pupils in Year 3 is rightly identified by leaders as a concern. Despite a few remaining weaknesses the school's most recent assessment data and the quality of pupils' work in their books show that progress has been accelerating since spring 2012. Pupils in Year 4 and Year 6 are mostly making good progress and pupils are on track to make at least expected progress in English and mathematics across Key Stage 2.

Senior and increasingly middle leaders are more robust in analysing pupils' progress. Leaders are more incisive in their analysis of the progress of pupils at the early and later stages of learning English as an additional language. The systematic sharing of assessment information with class teachers is helping them become more familiar with the minimum progress expected within a year and over time from Key Stage 1 to 2. Some teachers are better at using information about pupils' levels of ability to plan good lessons but others are not.

Observations of lessons conducted jointly with the headteacher show that some teaching is good but there remains some inconsistency in teaching over time because planning is not sufficiently detailed to meet the needs of all pupils. Not all teachers give harder work to stretch the more-able pupils. Pupils of lower and middle ability in Key Stage 1 are beginning to receive reading work to develop their independence as readers but in Key Stage 2 there is a more mixed picture.

When teaching is good pupils are challenged to think for themselves, describe and evaluate their ideas. Pupils want to learn and a few say they are ready for harder work. In a Year 6 English lessons pupils enjoyed showing their good understanding of subordinate clauses, confidently working together and speaking in front of the whole class. In good, well-paced lessons teachers use a mix of independent work, pair and group work for different activities, successfully sustaining pupils' interest.

The teaching of systematic synthetic phonics throughout the school is improving. In a Year 1 lesson pupils eagerly read to the inspector, showing how they blend individual sounds within simple words. The guided reading work each day is beginning to help develop pupils' fluency in reading. There are early signs of improvements in writing in some but not all classes. A greater range of reading resources is encouraging some pupils to read for pleasure but planning for and evaluating how well reading is used across all subjects is just starting.

Teachers are increasingly able to use different approaches to help pupils who speak English as an additional language. Good quality training sessions help staff understand about different stages of language acquisition and how to combine speaking, writing and listening activities matched to pupils' needs. Progress of the pupils who speak English as an additional language and progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is steadily improving.

The new headteacher is supporting the senior leadership team in modelling best practice in teaching. Drawing together of information from training sessions, sharing of ideas with colleagues and advice from external partners are improving teachers' work, but ensuring all teaching is good or better is a critical priority this year. Similarly, the quality and detail in marking pupils' work is improving but there is some inconsistency. Some pupils do not know how to improve their work and take the next steps towards their targets. In examples of good marking pupils respond to highlighted comments so that teachers can check and see if pupils have corrected and developed their work. This is not embedded across the school.

The local authority statement of action and school development plans serve the school well. Targets are focused on ways of improving teaching and raising achievement. Senior leaders, advisers from the local authority and partners from a local academy work well together and leaders are addressing the remaining weaknesses in teaching. The headteacher is developing the capacity of middle leaders at Wilberforce to undertake lesson observations and accurately judge the quality of teaching.

The headteacher is setting high expectations of pupils and staff. There is no room for complacency. Leaders take tough decisions in setting targets for staff so that pupils' achievement is not affected by poor teaching. Demanding questioning by the IEB holds leaders to account for accelerating pupils' progress. The Chair of the IEB gives good support to the new headteacher and senior leaders are working well together to check the success of the targets in the action plan, review progress data for each class and set new priorities which come from findings from audits of teaching and pupils' work. The rigorous approach of the new IEB, greater capacity in the senior leadership team, coupled with excellent work with the local authority, show that the trajectory of positive improvement begun last year is gathering momentum. The reducing level of support from the local authority reflects the improved capacity of leaders to continue to take 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

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2012

- To improve pupils' achievement, and make all teaching at least good by:
 - ensuring a closer match between the level of work provided and the learning needs of all pupils, so all are challenged
 - raising the expectations of all staff, so that they are clear about what each year group should be achieving in reading, writing and mathematics
 - implementing a more structured approach to building the language skills of those pupils learning English as an additional language
 - broadening the range of strategies that pupils, particularly middle and lower attainers, use in their reading, so that they become more independent as learners.

- Make the leadership and management of the school good or better by ensuring that:
 - with immediate effect, leaders at all levels monitor more precisely the impact of initiatives and use this information to drive forward improvement in the quality of teaching
 - governors establish more effective procedures to hold the school rigorously to account for achieving the targets it has set itself.