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5 June 2013

Hilary Thomas  
Acting Headteacher  
St Martin's Primary School  
Holly Bush Walk  
Hereford  
HR2 6AF

Dear Mrs Thomas

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Martin's Primary School, Herefordshire local authority.**

Following my visit to your school on 4 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, representatives of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I visited lessons briefly and looked at pupils' books on a tour of the school. Documentation was scrutinised, including records of the outcomes of monitoring activities and performance management arrangements.

**Context**

Since the last inspection the headteacher has retired on grounds of ill health. A new headteacher has been appointed to take up position in September, when the current acting headteacher will resume her position as deputy headteacher. A new co-

ordinator of numeracy has been appointed in an acting capacity. The phase leader for Key Stage 2 has moved to another school and has not been replaced.

## **Main findings**

The school has undergone considerable turbulence in its leadership since the last inspection, which has reduced the size of the senior team and exerted pressure on its capacity to drive improvement. Nonetheless you, with the energetic support of the phase leaders of Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage, have successfully moved the school forward in key respects. Systems for tracking pupils' progress, monitoring the quality of teaching, and checking on the quality of pupils' work, have improved markedly. New arrangements for managing the performance of teachers and teaching assistants are enabling leaders and staff to identify much clearer targets for the improvement of teaching and learning. Actions have been taken to strengthen the middle leadership of the school, particularly to take forward improvements in literacy and numeracy. The impact of the work of the extended literacy team is evident in pupils' greater enthusiasm for reading and in an increased emphasis by teachers and pupils on good presentation of work. In numeracy, pupils speak very positively of their enjoyment of more challenging problem-solving tasks both in mathematics lessons and special events like the 'Mighty Maths Day'. Pupils' books show that they do apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, although there has yet to be a comprehensive review of the curriculum to ensure that teachers plan effectively to develop these and other skills progressively over time.

Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's improvement plan sets out detailed actions to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. The criteria for measuring the success of these actions are, however, not precise enough to allow leaders and governors to effectively monitor progress through the plan. The plan does not always identify specifically identify how the success of actions will be monitored, nor establish mechanisms for periodically evaluating and reviewing the plan. Governors efficiently work to ensure that the school meets statutory policy requirements, but their role in monitoring and evaluating performance and improvement in the school is underdeveloped. The governing body does not have sharp enough procedures for checking on the impact of school actions, including in the performance management of staff or spending on the pupil premium. The governing body continues to have a number of unfilled vacancies.

*Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:*

- develop the curriculum to ensure that pupils have high quality opportunities to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills across subjects

- sharpen the school's improvement planning to provide more precise criteria for measuring the success of actions taken, and to identify clear methods for monitoring and evaluating progress through the plan
- commission an external review of governance to strengthen governors' capacity to play an active role in evaluating school improvement and to hold the school to account for its performance.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided the school with valuable support and advice in key respects, including in the appointment of the new headteacher and the deployment of consultant support for improving pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy. The school has begun to establish some links with other local partners, for example with the local secondary school to promote learning of more-able pupils. Plans are appropriately under consideration for a considerable expansion of collaborative working with other local schools as a means of securing essential support for professional and leadership development, in response to a restructuring of the local authority's school improvement services.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Herefordshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**