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17 June 2014

Mr Keith Ford  
Headteacher  
St Martin's Garden Primary School  
Lympsham Green  
Bath  
BA2 2UN

Dear Mr Ford

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Martin's Garden Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on Monday 16 June with Dale Burr seconded inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a group of Year 6 pupils to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school development plan was evaluated and other documents and the school's analysis of data were discussed. We also toured the school, so that we could visit all the classrooms.

## Context

Following the school's inspection in February 2014, a new post of assistant headteacher has been created. In April 2014, the newly appointed post-holder began work at the school. The school's leaders have restructured the administration team and reallocated the roles and responsibilities. One teacher is leaving at the end of the summer term and a newly appointed teacher will join the school in September 2014. The local authority appointed a new school achievement partner to work with the school from April 2014.

## Main findings

- The school's leaders recognise and acknowledge that the February 2014 inspection judgements were fair and accurate.
- The school has begun to develop the capacity to improve. Representatives from the school have attended Ofsted presentations to develop an awareness and understanding of successful strategies to bring about improvement.
- The school's development plan includes eight key areas identified for improvement. The overarching whole-school target to improve pupils' attainment is suitably challenging. As yet, the plan does not make clear how each key area will be monitored and evaluated to determine what progress has been achieved.
- The decision to appoint a full-time assistant headteacher has added to and strengthened the senior leadership team. The appointment has also provided an opportunity to reallocate the school's pastoral responsibilities and thereby provide the headteacher with more time for leading improvement activities.
- There is a strong determination across the school to bring about the improvements needed. Staff morale is good and the teachers and support staff are working together well.
- The pupils speak highly of the school and are positive about the recent changes that have been introduced. They comment about how pupils' behaviour has improved recently and say that everyone is paying more attention in class making it is easier to learn.
- The school's recent survey of parental views demonstrates that they too are very positive about all aspects of the school.
- There is a strong sense of inclusivity throughout the school. Pupils from the Margaret Coates Centre are provided with good opportunities to participate with activities in the main school.
- Those teachers identified as needing to improve their practice are being supported appropriately. There are signs of some early improvement, but further work is required to ensure that all classes are working consistently across the school.
- The school has invested wisely in developing teachers' practice. The introduction of strategies to improve pupils' writing skills is a good example of how the teachers and support staff are working together successfully.

- The school has taken action to ensure that pupils' progress is monitored and tracked frequently. The use of assessment information is helping teachers to identify gaps in pupils' learning. The school's calculation policy has proved helpful to teachers as it sets out clear expectations for pupils' development as they move through the school. As yet, the school has not developed a similar policy that sets out expectations for developing pupils' literacy skills.
- The school is setting higher expectations than previously to ensure that pupils are making good progress each year. Although senior leaders are evaluating pupils' attainment against the levels expected they have not taken into account the fact that the national averages have risen in recent years. As a result, even if the school's targets are achieved, pupils will not be reaching the national levels, which may lead to future inspections judging the school as under-performing.
- The senior leaders are reporting regularly to the governing body, which is improving governors' knowledge about the school's performance.
- The governing body has completed an internal analysis of its own performance, which recognises the strengths and areas that need improvement. Governors have not yet initiated an external review of governance, which should be arranged as a matter of urgency.
- As part of their development, the governors are taking the initiative to improve their skill at understanding information about pupils' development. They recognise that they need to monitor the performance of the school's senior leaders as they lead the improvement priorities.

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 reacted quickly to the school's inspection findings and appointed a new school achievement partner who is working closely with the school. Working together, the headteacher and the school achievement partner have observed teaching across the school and reviewed pupils' learning. This initiative has provided the school with useful information that is being used to tailor support for individual teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bath and North East Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**