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27 November 2014

Mr Keith Ford  
Headteacher  
St Martin's Garden Primary School  
Lympsham Green  
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Dear Mr Ford

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

Following my visit to your school on 27 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 second 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 inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. The inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. In addition, the inspector also scrutinised relevant documents and met with a group of pupils.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, nearly 40 additional pupils have joined the school; almost half of the new arrivals speak English as an additional language. The

school has appointed two additional teachers so that the increased numbers of pupils can be accommodated. A teacher has also returned from being on maternity leave. In addition, two teaching assistants have been appointed, one of whom is supporting a pupil with special educational needs.

As a result of some governors retiring from the governing body, new governors are being appointed.

The Margaret Coates Centre, which is a specialist unit within the school for pupils with special educational needs relating to autistic spectrum disorder, has recently received an autism accreditation award from The National Autistic Society for the high quality of its work.

## **Main findings**

The school's leaders have taken prompt action to introduce initiatives and begin improving the school's performance. The headteacher is showing the leadership needed to enable the school to improve. He has an accurate knowledge of the school's current position and recognises that further work is needed to raise standards. The current evidence shows that the school is building strong foundations to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement. The evidence also shows that there is a trend of improving attainment in some key stages, which is beginning to improve the standards pupils achieve.

The 2014 results of the Year 1 phonics check demonstrate a clear improvement on the previous year's figures and show the school's results as being above the national average. There was very little difference in the results achieved by boys and girls. Disadvantaged pupils performed well and there was almost no difference between their performance and other pupils in the year group.

The school's 2014 Key Stage 1 results have risen slowly. However, the rate of improvement is not yet fast enough and pupils' attainment has not yet reached the national average. Girls' attainment is slightly better than that achieved by the boys. Similarly, there is a relatively small attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the year group. The pupils with special educational needs made good progress and achieved well.

In 2014, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the level expected for mathematics, reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling was greater than was the case in 2013. However, despite this increase, not all pupils made enough progress across the key stage, with the result that pupils' attainment remains lower than the national average.

The senior leaders are focused on improving the quality of teaching across the school. They are taking strong action to ensure that pupils make good progress as they move through the school. The senior leaders have a good knowledge of each

individual teacher's abilities and they are providing focused training activities to ensure that there is a greater consistency of good quality teaching across the school. As a result, teachers are sharing ideas about good practice and engaging in the new initiatives. Staff morale is high and there is a positive mood across the school.

School leaders are holding teachers to account effectively for their pupils' progress. Teachers have been set appropriately challenging targets that can be used to evaluate their effectiveness in the classroom. The observations of teaching that are carried out by members of the senior leadership team are increasingly focusing on how well pupils are learning. Teachers are also meeting regularly to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress to ensure that they are on track to meet their targets. As a result, teachers know how well the pupils in their class are achieving.

The subject leaders for English and mathematics are contributing well to the school's improvement programme. They have each reviewed pupils' test papers to determine which aspects of their subjects need strengthening. Their careful analysis has highlighted the need to increase teachers' expectations of pupils and ensure that work being planned is suitably challenging. At present, there is a strong and appropriate focus on developing pupils' writing skills. Working with external subject advisers, the English leader has introduced a programme to improve the quality of pupils' written work. Although introduced very recently, there is evidence to show that pupils are taking a greater pride in their writing.

The two leaders with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs provide strong leadership and ensure that teachers are held to account for pupils' achievement. As part of their work, both senior leaders are responsible for the staff who work with and support pupils with special educational needs. The staff are monitored and held accountable for the progress of these pupils. The school's tracking of pupils' progress confirms that this group of pupils benefit from the additional support provided.

The decision to appoint an assistant headteacher with responsibility for pupils' pastoral needs has provided staff with valuable support in managing those pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour. Pupils understand that the school has high expectations of behaviour and recognise that any transgressions are handled fairly. The school has started to record evidence, which includes relevant details of exclusions and other behavioural incidents, to monitor the effectiveness and impact of the increased focus on pupils' behaviour.

The external review of governance has been completed. The report has not yet been published, but already the governors are taking account of and acting on the feedback they have received. They are fully committed to working with the school to enable it to improve as quickly as possible. They have a good understanding of its strengths and areas that need further work. They speak highly of the detailed information that they receive from the senior leaders, describing it as

understandable and believable. They use this information to question the school's leaders to establish how well the improvement initiatives are working.

### **External support**

The local authority has arranged for an experienced and successful headteacher to work with and support the school. Although this initiative is still in its early days, the support has been welcomed by the school.

The school is also benefiting from educational consultants who are advising and assisting with the initiatives to improve the quality of teaching. The impact of this work can be demonstrated through the initiatives that have been introduced and the sense of purpose that exists.

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**