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4 March 2008

Mrs K Creek  
The Headteacher  
St Martin's School  
Markland Road  
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CT17 9LY

Dear Mrs Creek

### Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when we inspected your school on 13 February 2008, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you and your staff provided before and during our visit. The prompt and smiling courtesy with which your pupils greeted us, both in lessons and as we moved around the school, was a pleasure to experience.

As a result of the inspection on 2 to 4 May 2007, the school was asked to:

- ensure that pupils' individual needs are quickly identified and that all pupils know what they need to do to do better
- raise teachers' expectations of the amount of work that pupils can do in lessons
- focus the monitoring of school leaders and subject teams on evaluating the impact of teaching and other provision on pupils' learning and on the progress that pupils make in lessons and over time.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

To resolve problems caused by the long term absence of key staff from 2004 to 2007, the headteacher and her deputy took on direct responsibility for literacy and numeracy provision in 2006 and 2007. The deputy also took on the coordinator role for Reception and Years 1 and 2. Difficulties in recruiting staff led to responsibility for foundation subjects, such as history and geography, being placed with teams of teachers rather than with middle managers. This combination of expedients proved difficult to manage effectively.

As part of staff restructuring from January 2007 the school has reorganised its senior and middle management and developed systems for the prompt identification of individual needs and for assessment and tracking of pupils' progress. Following the inspection in May 2007, with guidance from local authority (LA) advisers and

representation from parents, these systems have been further developed and are becoming embedded. A review of standards and achievement indicated that team management of foundation subjects was not benefiting all pupils and new subject leader appointments were made in September. Since September 2007, there has been good support from the LA and the cluster of schools to which St Martin's belongs. Involvement in the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) and in a pilot scheme to develop communication, language and literacy skills is providing sustained support for the school's progress. The LA has initiated an effective programme of training and modelling of good practice. The school's response has been positive at all levels. There is now a clear focus on evaluating the impact of teaching on learning and on the progress pupils make in lessons and over time, clearly demonstrated by the senior leadership and the systems recently put in place. The role of middle management is still developing.

Lesson observations showed that teachers' expectations of what can successfully be accomplished in a session have been raised. The pace was generally brisk, with movement from one task to the next keeping pupils interested and giving them a sense of progress. Games or quick fire question and answer sessions demonstrated that most pupils had grasped and enjoyed the information and skills covered. Whilst whole class and group activities did not always stretch and occupy more able pupils fully, there were examples of multilayered tasks that gave these children opportunities to be inventive and to lead others in problem solving.

One of the senior leadership team members now very effectively combines the roles of special needs coordinator and pastoral manager. There is now a good system for early identification of individual needs, successfully involving pupils and their parents in this process. After a settling in period, children are thoroughly assessed, strategies developed to ensure that their learning is well supported, and all teachers given clear information. Parents are more responsive to opportunities to learn what and how their children are being taught and to contribute to discussions about their progress. The needs of more able pupils are not as clearly identified and supported as those of other children. Target setting has become well embedded in the school's culture. Pupils are aware of their targets and keen to meet them, but they do not often have the independence or confidence to make that judgement themselves and wait for end of term assessments to confirm their progress. Marking of written work does not always give specific guidance on how to improve.

I hope you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Metham".

Patricia Metham  
Her Majesty's Inspector