

Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland  
Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR  
T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr Philip Pope  
The Headteacher  
St Martin's Garden Primary School  
Lympsham Green  
Odd Down  
Bath  
BA2 2UN

Dear Mr Pope

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 20 May 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the chair of governors and the representative of the local authority (LA) with whom I had discussions.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 24 and 25 September 2007, the school was asked to: improve achievement and standards in English and mathematics; ensure that senior and middle leaders effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching; and, improve teaching by increasing the pace and challenge of lessons, particularly in English and mathematics.

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 pupils' achievement.

At the time of the last inspection, standards were exceptionally low and the achievement of pupils in Years 1 to 6 was inadequate. The school's own data show that standards remain exceptionally low across the school. Standards observed in the school are similar in Year 2 and Year 6 to those in 2007. However, the pupils' starting points were lower, showing that their achievement is better than in the previous year. There is also some evidence of improved progress in other year groups but this is inconsistent across the school, reflecting inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. There is a positive shift in achievement in English and mathematics but this is at an early stage of development.

The school has worked hard and with some success to improve the overall quality of teaching in English and mathematics. Good relationships between adults and pupils are carefully and effectively fostered. The pupils' behaviour in lessons and willingness to learn are good throughout the school. Learning benefits from a curriculum which enriches and motivates the pupils and this has played its part in improving behaviour and attendance. Good questioning techniques probe and stretch the pupils' understanding, encouraging them to develop and justify their own ideas and become more independent in their learning. In some lessons there is a variety of activities which maintains a brisk and purposeful pace, providing frequent occasions for pupils to reflect on their learning and gauge their progress. However, there are occasions when pupils sit and listen to teachers telling them what they are going to do for too long, which makes them passive and compliant rather than active and eager to learn. This stifles their engagement and independence and does not provide the challenge and pace which they require. Marking in some year groups is very good with comments clearly showing what has been achieved and pointing out the next steps for learning specifically. However, this is inconsistent across the school. The use of data has been effective in identifying groups or individuals who benefit from tailored support, but this does not always feed into lesson planning in whole class situations. The school now has assessment procedures which provide more accurate data about the pupils' standards and progress.

The monitoring of teaching is more regular and rigorous than previously and good practice has been consolidated in the school. The increased confidence and effectiveness of staff in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are improving provision and having a positive impact on learning. Senior and middle leaders have benefited from working alongside LA staff to moderate their judgements and develop their expertise in this area. However, although the monitoring programme has led to improvements, judgements are sometimes too focused on teaching rather than learning. Occasionally there is still a tendency to underestimate the potential of the pupils, although this is not as prevalent as it was at the time of the last inspection.

The school benefits from a high level of focused support from the LA at all levels. Governors, senior and middle leaders, and classroom teachers have all received appropriately targeted and good support, ensuring that the school has received praise for its achievements and clear identification of areas for improvement. The LA has not modified its Statement of Action as requested to show how parents and carers will be informed of plans for improvement or how their views will be gathered and taken into account, but in all other respects support and intervention have been regular, rigorous and effective.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Harrett  
Her Majesty's Inspector