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20 May 2009

Mr E McGilp  
The Headteacher  
St Martin's Primary School  
Holly Bush Walk  
Hereford  
Herefordshire  
HR2 6AF

Dear Mr McGilp

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 19 May 2009, 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 staff, pupils and governors for their courtesy and contributions to my visit.

As a result of the inspection in September 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science
- ensure consistently good teaching enables pupils to achieve as well as they can
- ensure academic guidance makes clear to pupils the next steps in their learning
- improve the rigour of self-evaluation so that teaching can successfully address the precise causes of low achievement.

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 the pupils' achievement.

Standards remain low but are improving slowly. There are now more reliable systems to assess pupil progress, and the school is analysing this data well. It indicates that the majority of pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in most classes. The wide variation in standards in the national test results of 2008 are not expected to be so extreme in 2009 according to current teacher assessments. The school now knows in detail how each child is making progress. As a result, the recently appointed special educational needs coordinator has rationalised support for children with learning difficulties and/or difficulties. This is leading to more appropriate and timely intervention.

The planning of lessons provides a good level of differentiation of work for pupils of different abilities. In almost every example, however, a teaching assistant is assigned to work with groups of less able pupils, rather than the class teacher. All



the lessons seen during this visit were satisfactory, and most of them were good. In these good lessons, the pace of activity was high, teachers set time limits for the tasks and encouraged pupils with good-humoured praise. Pupils responded positively and were keen to try their best. In a few other instances, the class-based discussions did not include every pupil. Occasionally, teachers accepted the first response offered rather than gathering more suggestions. The pupils behaved very well in all classes and around the school.

The day-to-day marking of English and mathematics work is consistently regular, accurate and thorough. Good work is praised, and errors clearly noted so that pupils should know how to make it better next time. However, sometimes pupils do not take sufficient notice of this advice and repeat the problem. They are not yet in the habit of making corrections in response to the teacher's comments and so are missing opportunities to learn from their mistakes. Marking of other subject work is less detailed and, in a few cases, is merely an acknowledgement of the effort of the pupils not an attempt to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

The school has recently reviewed and changed its management structure, including new roles for literacy, numeracy and science coordinators. This has been supported by local authority training for these staff, who are relishing their new-found responsibilities and keen to further help improve standards. They are now monitoring teaching quality and work standards and feed this into regular staff discussions on how to improve achievement further. The local authority retains close and accurate monitoring of the progress the school is making. It is rightly concerned to ensure that the further strengthening of basic classroom teaching and learning practice should remain as the focus for school improvement. In consultation with the local authority's school improvement service the school has set out 'non-negotiables' with all staff that define expected standards of preparation and classroom management. These are clearly having a positive impact on raising the quality of teaching. There are fewer temporary teaching posts compared to previous years. Although not a key issue, there is plenty of evidence of bright, well-presented displays of current pupils' work in all classrooms and corridors.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright  
Her Majesty's Inspector