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20 March 2014

Susan Allen
Headteacher
Ivy House School
Moorway Lane
Littleover
Derby
DE23 2FS

Dear Mrs Allen

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ivy House School

Following my visit to your school on 19 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report my 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.

This was the first visit since the school was judged to require improvement at its inspection in December 2013. 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. The school should take further action to:

- Ensure that small improvements in pupil's progress are effectively recorded and that targets are always appropriately ambitious
- Bring together all the evidence gathered about quality of teaching so that you can more effectively target specific areas for professional development, for both teachers and support staff
- Strengthen the procedures for evaluating the school's improvement, so that governors and others can more easily judge the impact of actions taken
- Seek external advice to find suitable similar schools, with which to work, in order to develop, moderate and evaluate good practice.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, other senior leaders a group of pupils and students and the Chair of the Governing Body. I also telephoned a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and post-Ofsted action and also toured classrooms, observed learning taking place and scrutinised the school's systems for recording and monitoring pupil's progress and the quality of teaching.

Context

An external review of governance has taken place, the report of which was due to be presented to the governing body shortly after this visit.

Main findings

The headteacher has only been at the school for just over one year, but has made a significant impact in that time. This was acknowledged in the December inspection report. The school is developing more accurate ways to measure small steps in pupils' progress. Teachers and teaching assistants currently focus on specific learning goals for each pupil in each lesson, but progress is not always recorded in ways that make it easy to spot when pupils are making better progress or are falling behind. Staff make very good use of the excellent facilities to ensure that pupils experience a range of activities to develop communication and coordination skills appropriate to their age and ability.

Leaders have not been sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that the wide range of initiatives and changes implemented over the last year or so have been properly evaluated. It is not yet possible to know how much impact has been made from some changes and activities because of this. The school's development plan correctly addresses all of the areas for improvement identified at the inspection. The actions are appropriate to bring about improvement but it is not clear when and how progress will be measured and reported to governors. Governors have been proactive in improving governance, had initiated a skills audit prior to the December inspection and have fully engaged with the recent review. They are quickly building their skills and techniques to hold school leaders to account effectively.

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

A school improvement officer from the local authority has provided a good level of challenge to leaders. The local authority governor support service has provided additional support for the governing body recently. However, the leaders have not always been able to find good local sources of expert specialist advice relating to the

particular complex needs of some of the school's pupils. Senior leaders have begun to look for links with other similar schools. Stronger links would enable faster sharing of good practice and strengthen evaluation of the school's work.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Derby City.

Yours sincerely

John Peckham
Her Majesty's Inspector