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Helen Tate  
Ipplepen Primary School  
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Newton Abbot  
Devon  
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Dear Helen Tate

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ipplepen Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 24 May 2016, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2015. 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- support all governors to have a good understanding of different groups of pupils' progress
- build on the improved achievement of disadvantaged pupils to further reduce the gap between these pupils and their peers.
- ensure that teaching assistants are used to best effect.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, pupils, the chair of the board of governors, a representative of the local authority and the executive headteacher of the United Schools Federation to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. School action plans and other school documents were evaluated. A

learning walk was conducted with the headteacher, during which pupils' books were scrutinised.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection you have been working closely with the United Schools Federation with a view to formally joining the federation at the beginning of July. A number of staff have left the school since the last inspection. New staff have been appointed, including a specialist leader of education to lead the early years foundation stage.

## **Main findings**

You and your staff have been well supported by governors, the local authority and the United Schools Federation to tackle the areas for improvement that emerged from the last inspection. The key focus of your work has been to improve teaching and learning. As a result, you have shown a determination to confront weak practice and address the various aspects of teaching requiring improvement. You have put in place more rigorous procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. These are now linked to the management of teachers' performance and the training opportunities available to staff. The monitoring of teachers' performance now occurs on an ongoing basis, rather than intermittently, and teachers have benefited from training on, for example, how to pose questions more effectively and improve mathematics subject knowledge.

Teachers now have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve; they provide work that is more suited to their different needs with the right degree of challenge, whatever pupils' abilities. The activities that teachers plan fire pupils' imagination and secure their interest. On our learning walk we observed Year 6 pupils being absorbed in their learning because they were tackling different mathematical activities devised around the theme of funfair rides. One group of pupils used the loops of a roller coaster to calculate angles. Another group considered word problems assessing the value for money of different rides, taking into account the cost of the ticket and duration of the ride. The pupils I had a discussion with were positive about the way they were taught. One pupil said 'It's fun to learn things here. Teachers make the work as imaginative as possible.'

Pupils are also positive about the feedback they receive in their books, commenting that it helps them to learn. Teaching assistants now work more flexibly so that they can assist a larger number of pupils who require their help. However, you and other leaders acknowledge that there is more work to be done to further increase teaching assistants' effectiveness.

As a result of better teaching, pupils' enthusiasm for learning and a broader curriculum that includes more opportunities to experience subjects such as music and physical education, pupils are making more rapid progress. This is also the case

for pupils who are disadvantaged, although there is still a gap between their achievement and that of their peers.

Under a new leader, the early years foundation stage has improved significantly since the last inspection. Both the inside and outside areas are vibrant, dynamic places full of resources that encourage children to develop in different ways. Children are encouraged to experiment and be adventurous and there are a number of different activities they can choose from to do this. For instance, they can play musical instruments to experiment with rhythm and sound or manipulate sand and water to explore different materials. Alongside activities such as these, children are also encouraged to practise writing to develop their fine motor skills. The teacher organises activities and other adults effectively so that children can access all of the activities at different times. These explorations are recorded in detail in children's learning journals so the teacher can accurately assess their improving progress.

Governors now challenge leaders more effectively than at the time of the previous inspection. This is because new governors with useful expertise have joined the board and because the chair has ensured that the board has a more strategic rather than operational role. The questions they pose are focused on standards and the quality of teaching. Furthermore, as you commented to me, governors now 'relentlessly pursue' the answers. Although certain governors have a keen understanding of the progress made by groups of pupils, not all governors do. A shared understanding of pupils' progress by all governors will increase further the board's effectiveness.

### **External support**

The school has been assisted greatly by the support it has received from the United Schools Trust. This is primarily because the federation's executive headteacher has supported you with strategic planning, helping you to develop a way forward to tackle the areas for improvement from the last inspection. In addition, the federation has supported the school by providing staff and training opportunities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**