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Mrs Susan Watts  
Ivy Road Primary School  
Ivy Road  
Forest Hall  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
Tyne and Wear  
NE12 9AP

Dear Mrs Watts

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ivy Road Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 30 June 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 October 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

**Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the leaders of English and mathematics, members of the governing body (including one of the chairs of governors) and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan and other documents were evaluated. You accompanied me on a learning walk around the school to look at teaching and learning in classes together with the progress and standards in pupils' books. I also checked the school's single central record and recruitment processes in respect of staff new to the school since the previous inspection.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to leadership. The deputy headteacher left the school at Easter. An acting deputy headteacher has been appointed from within the school. New leaders of English, the early years and special educational needs and/or disabilities took on these responsibilities at the start of the summer term 2016. A Year 6 teacher joined the school in April 2016.

## **Main findings**

A sound action plan has been developed with the support of the local authority. It includes milestones against which progress can be measured. Despite this promising development, school leaders have been slow to take action and to secure improvements in leadership, teaching and pupils' achievement. The response has begun to quicken this term. The headteacher worked hard to secure improvements in the early years and to establish a new senior leadership team for the beginning of the summer term. However, leaders have not been effective in tackling important areas that require improvement.

Governance remains weak. Delays in commissioning external reviews of pupil premium funding and of governance mean that these aspects of the school have not developed as swiftly as they need to. Although a new governor experienced in the interpretation of internal and external assessment information has been recruited, gaps in some key areas of expertise, such as in finance, still remain. Despite attending local authority training, governors acknowledge that their ability to support and challenge the headteacher and senior leaders is not strong enough. This is further compounded by the large proportion of staff on the governing body. It is difficult for them to challenge and support themselves.

Many senior and middle leaders have only recently taken up their posts. Two thirds have very little experience of checking attainment and progress in the areas that they lead. Although very keen to become effective middle leaders, they have not had sufficient training and practical opportunities to develop and hone their skills. Their capacity to check teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility effectively is at an embryonic stage.

Leaders are undertaking checks on the quality of teaching. They set areas for development, such as improving presentation in pupils' books, ensuring that the date is set out, and they check that all pupils complete the task. However, these checks are not sufficiently forensic or firmly focused on pupils' learning and outcomes as outlined in the previous inspection report.

The headteacher has ensured that teachers receive training to improve their skills. Guidance on the use of assessment information is having some impact. Teachers are beginning to provide work at just the right level for the school's most-able pupils and those pupils who need additional help. Senior leaders have received training too. They have used this to help staff develop strategies to encourage pupils to make connections in their learning and develop 'deeper thinking'. However, the implementation of this in classrooms is at a very early stage of development.

The quality of teaching remains inconsistent. Sometimes, teachers' subject knowledge is lacking. For example, during my visit, teachers did not always pronounce sounds correctly in phonics sessions in which children learn about letters and the sounds they make. As a result, the children pronounced the sounds incorrectly too. In another lesson, the teacher and the pupils interpreted information from a line graph and opportunities were missed to teach (or to reinforce) subject-specific language such as axis, axes and point of origin. The use of correct technical language was a specific area for improvement in the last inspection report.

Children in the Nursery class make strong progress because of the well thought out provision and the expertise of staff. The children took part in a sound hunt in the outdoor environment during the inspection. One three-year-old child was delighted to find 'igh' and sounded it aloud three times (accompanied by the appropriate actions) and, delighted, ticked it off the list of sounds. The excitement and joy and sense of learning were palpable. Senior leaders have ambitious plans to develop the early years provision further before the start of the autumn term.

The standards pupils reach and the progress pupils make remain inconsistent across the school. Actions taken are not yet having a swift impact on pupils' attainment and progress in all classes.

### **External support**

The local authority has supported leaders to develop an action plan and to assess the quality of teaching in the school. In addition, the senior school improvement officer for primary standards has chaired regular meetings of a raising achievement group. The impact of this work is not yet evident in pupils' attainment and progress across the school. Nonetheless, governors appreciate the local authority's recent assurances to help find and recruit a governor with the necessary and vital skills in finance.

Formal partnerships have yet to be forged with good or outstanding schools. An application for school-to-school support through the National College for Teaching and Leadership is currently being discussed. I strongly recommend that this application is made at the earliest available opportunity.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Tyneside. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**