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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 9 January 2017, 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 second 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 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:

- reduce the number of governors who are also members of staff.

**Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior and middle leaders, six members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I observed subject leaders conducting a scrutiny of pupils' work and made a series of brief visits to lessons. You accompanied me on most visits to lessons. I scrutinised a number of the school's

documents, including minutes of the governing body and information about pupils' progress.

## **Context**

The acting deputy headteacher at the time of the previous monitoring visit has been appointed to the substantive post and a new teacher has been appointed to teach in the Nursery.

## **Main findings**

The rate of improvement in the school has picked up speed since the previous monitoring inspection. You and other leaders are acutely aware that there is a great deal of ground to make up because of the slow start described in the monitoring letter in July 2016. You have tackled weak teaching effectively and remain vigilant where teaching is less than good. The school improvement plan continues to provide a useful tool to support you and governors to check on improvements.

Governors continue to take steps to develop their skills. A governor with finance skills has been appointed. Governors continue to take advantage of training opportunities and minutes from meetings show that they are now asking appropriate questions and tracking leaders' responses to actions that they have requested. There are still too many members of the governing body who are also members of staff. This was raised at the previous monitoring inspection but remains an issue as it prevents the governors from having a fully objective view of how well the school is improving.

Results from the summer present a mixed picture, especially the progress pupils made in writing across the school. However, pupils' work in books shows that they are developing stamina, writing at length and using the correct technical language when they are talking about their work.

The quality of teaching is improving but there remains some inconsistency. This unevenness is echoed in the school's assessment information, which shows that, while pupils are generally on track to reach their targets, there are inconsistencies for different groups and in different year groups.

Leaders feed back regularly to teachers and this is beginning to have an impact on improving the quality of teaching. For example, teachers routinely use coloured sticks with pupils' names on them to choose who will answer a question. This helps teachers to make sure that everyone contributes to the lesson. The most skilled teachers then adapt their questions to make sure that the question is appropriate to the ability of the pupil. However, this is not consistent across the school.

Teachers have made a concerted effort to make sure that the tasks they give to pupils build on what pupils already know and can do. Teachers typically arrange

their classes in three broad ability groups and the tasks given to each group generally offer an appropriate level of challenge. Pupils now respond well to teachers' expectations that they complete tasks that involve them writing at length. However, occasionally, teachers provide resources that limit pupils' progress. For example, Year 4 pupils were provided with a question sheet but the space in which they had to write their answer did not allow for anything other than a short response.

The new early years unit is allowing for a more flexible approach. Changes to the building now allow children to move easily from room to room. This helps staff to respond more flexibly to children's needs and make sure that activities are pitched at the right level. Occasionally, activities led by the teacher go on too long and children, especially boys, become fidgety and lose concentration. However, the rich environment is stimulating and children are generally appropriately challenged.

### **External support**

The local authority's support has been effective, particularly in offering senior and middle leaders coaching in developing their monitoring skills. You and your senior team valued the recent review. This helped you to identify that writing in foundation subjects is not improving at the same rate as it is in literacy lessons.

You and other leaders have worked effectively with the local authority and the learning trust. The subject leaders for mathematics and English are developing effective skills in checking on the quality of pupils' work. They have worked alongside external consultants and, as a result, they are confident in recognising where pupils are underachieving.

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

Joan Hewitt  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**