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Mrs Rebecca Robinson
Acting Headteacher
Akrotiri Primary School
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Dear Mrs Robinson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Akrotiri Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 March 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 and your senior team made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2014. 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:

- as a matter of urgency, implement an efficient and effective system for recording assessments in the early years
- ensure that the short-term action plans identify the most important and urgent steps needed to achieve the school's priorities and are realistic about the timescales required to deliver these
- improve the school's assessment processes to create a coherent system for analysing pupils' achievement, both short- and long term.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, senior leadership team and members of the school governance committee (SGC) including the Chair, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held prior to the inspection with the Ministry of Defence Schools (MOD Schools) inspector-adviser, who is linked to the school. The school's current improvement and action plans were evaluated. Parts of some mathematics lessons in

Key Stages 1 and 2 were observed jointly with the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher. A range of documentation was taken into account, including the new policy for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision.

Context

The headteacher resigned at the beginning of this term. While a substantive post-holder is recruited, one of the deputy headteachers is currently the acting headteacher. Two new teachers joined the school in January 2016, replacing two who left at the end of the autumn term to take up new posts. Two temporary teachers are covering new classes created because the school's roll is increasing. Provision in Years 2 and 3 has been reorganised so that pupils are taught in smaller classes.

Main findings

Following the previous monitoring visit, progress on securing efficient and effective senior leadership faltered. The Chair of the SGC worked with MOD Schools senior colleagues to address this and to establish interim leadership arrangements. The SGC members are considering carefully how to secure reliable systems for gathering a full picture of the school's work so that they can fulfil their roles as critical friends to the school.

The acting headteacher and senior leaders are working collaboratively, with enormous dynamism and commitment, to put systems in place to drive the school's improvement at pace. They recognise that the foundations for this have to be firm and so, with the help of the military, organised a team-building day that got the term off to a positive start. This was built on promptly by a visioning day for all staff and governors. Those present pointed to the considerable skill and acumen of the acting headteacher as the main reason for the day's success. Senior leaders and staff agreed on the school's priorities and staff have contributed to the new strategic improvement plan. They have also agreed to give more of their own time to meetings so that improvements can be implemented more rapidly. The improvement plan sets out a large agenda for increasing the school's effectiveness so that it becomes good. Action plans to deliver this outcome are work in progress and have not yet been honed to reflect the most urgent and important steps needed this academic year. Senior leaders, staff and members of the SGC are fully aware of the need to focus sharply on the school's priorities in order to accelerate its progress towards good.

The acting headteacher and senior leaders have a realistic view of the school's main strengths and weaknesses, including the quality of teaching and learning. They are rapidly implementing a new policy for checking regularly and consistently on key aspects of the school's operation, so that developments can be both accurately targeted and timely. Procedures are set out clearly to ensure that these are well understood by staff and managed professionally for the benefit of individuals and

the school as a whole. Some fine-tuning is required to ensure that evidence about pupils' attainment and progress is drawn together from the various sources to gain as rounded a picture as possible of the impact of teaching. There are promising plans for teachers to work together, sharing their expertise and best practice, to develop strategies to support pupils who are not making the progress expected.

Leaders are continuing to develop new approaches to assessment to match the revised National Curriculum. However, although various aspects of this work are well under way, a coherent, reliable system is not fully in place. In the early years (FS1 and FS2), the electronic data collection and analysis system was discontinued at the beginning of the academic year and has not been replaced. Consequently, too much of the phase leader's time is expended on the mechanics of manually recording and analysing information about children's learning. This limits her capacity to lead improvements in learning for the youngest children.

As well as major improvement work, such as revising the curriculum to meet pupils' needs and national requirements, the senior team has made a range of sensible management decisions to help the school run more smoothly. One example relates to learning support staff who have been reallocated so that they work with individuals or small groups of pupils with the greatest needs.

Improvements in the quality of teaching, noted at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, have been maintained. Support is in place where teaching is not consistently of a high enough quality. A central strength that emerged during this inspection was the very good relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils respond positively to staff; they are enthusiastic learners, eager to participate in the engaging activities prepared for them, and keen to succeed. They behaved well and listened carefully, for example, when classmates explained the mathematics they used to reach an answer. Pupils try hard to present their work as neatly as possible and respond diligently to teachers' marking and feedback. They understand the need for accuracy, for instance when measuring angles with protractors, and use the mathematical language they have learned confidently. Lessons are less effective when activities and teachers' questioning do not build up pupils' understanding in a logical sequence. At such times, pupils are uncertain what is required of them and so the pace of learning slows.

The school's journey towards becoming good has not been steady to date but there are promising signs that appropriate improvements are in hand. Although it is too soon to evaluate the impact of many of the actions taken this term, these are building on improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

MOD Schools colleagues responded quickly when it became evident that both the school's day-to-day operation and long-term improvement were insecure, in part because the essential steps identified at last summer's leadership review were not being taken. Interim leadership arrangements were made promptly and MOD Schools advisers continue to support the school, such as with the development of an assessment system to match national requirements. Links with other island schools have strengthened, and expertise, for instance with regard to the early years, is being drawn upon. The headteacher of an outstanding school is mentoring the acting headteacher.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the School Governance Committee and the Senior Principal MOD Schools, Directorate of Children and Young People, at the Ministry of Defence.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector