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Mrs Rebecca Robinson  
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 22 November 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 fourth 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 in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- prioritise the teaching and outcomes of the most able pupils
- set clearer expectations of what pupils should achieve, at defined intervals across the year, so that all leaders can judge the impact of new strategies on pupils' attainment and progress.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leadership team, phase and curriculum leaders, and five members of the school governance committee (SGC), including the chair, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was also held with the Ministry of Defence Schools (MOD Schools) inspector-adviser (IA) who is linked to the school. The school's current improvement plans were evaluated, alongside recent records of the quality of teaching. Twelve part-lessons were jointly observed alongside the

headteacher and members of the senior leadership team to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, review the quality of pupils' work over time and talk to pupils informally about their experiences of school.

## **Context**

The acting headteacher was made substantive in March 2016. Nine new teachers joined the school, including two newly qualified teachers, at the start of the academic year. The leadership team has been restructured. It now includes four phase leaders and four curriculum leaders. At the time of the inspection, nine new members of the SGC were being inducted into their roles. This brings the SGC to full capacity. Nursery (FS1) and reception (FS2) classes continue to grow. These classes now represent approximately half of the school population.

## **Main findings**

Leadership is now stable at all levels. The tremendous amount of change over recent months, including a substantial turnaround in staffing, while difficult, has undoubtedly left the school in a much stronger position. The school now has the right people, in the right positions. You and your new team can move forward confidently in pursuit of even greater consistency in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. You rightly understand that, above all else, you must now maintain the momentum shown in the first 10 weeks of the academic year, to ensure that new ways of working embed quickly and have maximum impact.

You have been quick to implement the fundamental systems and processes needed to raise the overall quality of education and drive improvement. Importantly, approaches to assessment and the curriculum have taken priority. While these core elements of the school's work remain in their infancy, there is now a clear framework of accountability to ensure that these structures embed quickly and exert maximum influence over the quality of teaching. Middle leaders have benefited from your weekly coaching and mentoring as a senior leadership team. This investment in a cadre of new leaders has ensured that there is an in-built mechanism, at every key stage and for every subject, for turning strategic decisions into reality and constantly checking how well they are working in practice.

Many new approaches to teaching have been implemented already. Your evaluation of these new strategies has been equally swift. As a leadership team, you have observed teaching, scrutinised pupils' work and discussed pupils' progress with each teacher. To date, these activities have focused on how well staff have taken on board recent training to improve the overall quality of teaching. They have focused less on the learning and progress made by different groups of pupils, especially the most able. Given the growing proportion of pupils who are reaching standards of work above what is expected for their age, a brighter spotlight needs to be shone on the teaching, curriculum and outcomes of this group if they are to reach their full potential.

You acknowledge that a new approach to assessment has only been in operation for 10 weeks. At the time of the inspection, you had only just begun the process of gathering assessment information from each class. While the observations we entered into during my visit, and the pupils' books we reviewed, show that pupils are making strong gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding, you are yet to take stock formally by reviewing pupils' outcomes overall. This will be a crucial step in truly knowing, across the school, how far you have come and, more importantly, the distance still left to travel to secure the very best education for your pupils. You and the SGC agree that a sharper focus on how far you expect pupils, and different groups of pupils to have progressed at set milestones in the year would allow more forensic analyses of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is improving quickly. New staff has settled well. They have bought in to the renewed vision for what you all want to achieve as a school. Teaching is typically characterised by high expectations, strong relationships with pupils and happy, productive classroom environments. Your new approach to the curriculum has supported the development of these teaching qualities, for both staff and pupils. Exciting and creative topics are energising everyone to make pupils' learning experiences engaging and relevant. Pupils' attitudes to learning are changing. They are learning to be more resilient when faced with trickier tasks and to be more reflective about what they have learned: skills that will serve them well as life-long learners.

These teaching and learning behaviours are complemented by a set of frameworks in English and mathematics that make clear to staff how pupils' skills are to develop from year to year. For example, in English, teachers know how pupils' report writing should progress as they become more skilled at this genre. When this is coupled with more exciting opportunities to write, such as when describing a mythical beast sighted on the island, and a focus on getting the technical aspects of composition correct, pupils make swifter progress in their writing. Strategies to improve pupils' mathematics skills are also bearing fruit. On our learning walk, we particularly noted pupils' readiness to think more deeply and explain their reasoning. For example, Year 1 pupils were keen to explain why you would not land on 18 if you jumped in twos from 7. From looking at work in pupils' books, this type of questioning has become a more consistent feature of everyday mathematics work. It is ensuring that pupils have firm foundations on which to build more complex mathematical ideas. Phase leaders with responsibility for English and mathematics need to be commended for their work in getting these teaching frameworks off the ground so quickly. They are making an obvious difference to pupils' learning and attitudes.

Improvements to FS1 and FS2 classrooms have been equally positive. Staff have worked hard to ensure that teaching balances adult-led sessions with more child-focused, independent learning. This is based on a more robust system for capturing and recording the gains in children's learning and development. All staff have a clear sense of what children need to learn next and this includes a clear and effective focus on developing children's reading, writing and mathematics skills. We

noticed on our learning walk that most adults have become more skilled at knowing when to intervene, with a well-timed question or prompt, to move children's learning further forward. Your own observation records confirm this growing confidence of staff. They also record that staff similarly know when it is of more benefit to stand back and allow children the opportunity to develop their skills of cooperation, perseverance and concentration. As such, children are engaged in what they are doing and willing to have a go at new challenges and experiences.

The SGC has reviewed its structure and sought to strengthen its membership through a concerted recruitment campaign. It is now at full capacity and has a broad range of expertise to challenge and support the school. The new chair of the SGC brings an infectious commitment to the school, the station and the community as a whole. He has re-energised the work of the SGC, realigning responsibilities so that every leader and every subject now has a direct link to a member of the committee. This is beginning to allow more robust challenge, insightful questioning and timely requests for information. Greater precision in the targets set by leaders would support the SGC even further. They would welcome a more tangible means of holding the school to account for what pupils have achieved and how quickly.

### **External support**

MOD Schools has continued to provide significant levels of support. It has ensured stability of staffing and followed up recent appointments with a raft of coaching and mentoring opportunities. School leaders feel well supported by the advisory headteacher and the IA, in particular, both of whom share an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Partnership working with other island schools has allowed the sharing of best practice and provided a supportive hub for some of the curriculum leaders new to post. As a result, teaching is improving quickly and pupils are making much swifter progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the SGC and the Senior Principal MOD Schools, Directorate of Children and Young People, at the Ministry of Defence. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Owston  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**