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Mrs Sarah Baillie
Headteacher
Ayios Nikolaos Primary School
BFPO 59
Cyprus

Dear Mrs Baillie

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ayios Nikolaos Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 January 2015, 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 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and members of the School Governance Committee (SGC) are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- implement a consistent approach to teaching spelling.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, and members of the School Governance Committee (SGC), including the Vice Chair, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with the school's inspector-adviser prior to the visit. The school's action plan was evaluated. Visits to guided reading sessions in Key Stage 2 were conducted with the headteacher. The work of Key Stage 2 pupils in writing, science and topic was looked at with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Context

An internal appointment to the post of assistant headteacher has been made. One member of the teaching staff is on long-term sickness absence.

Main findings

Leaders have made a brisk start in addressing the improvements required. A suitable action plan was drawn up last term and, following a realistic end-of-term evaluation, extended and developed for this term. An increasing number of more-focused measures of success have been set and dates are included as milestone points. This kind of detail is important and useful because it helps leaders, including members of the SGC, to check that the school is improving. A programme of regular, targeted monitoring and evaluation has been established so that leaders are better placed to know whether initiatives and actions are proving successful. Notes are taken of the various monitoring activities and areas for development are followed up promptly.

The headteacher's decision to strengthen leadership capacity, through a new senior appointment and redistributing middle leadership responsibilities, is sensible. Middle leaders, including those new to their roles, are clear about the school's direction of travel and their responsibilities in driving improvement. They value the headteacher's regular reminders of actions they need to take, and deadlines, and say these are helping to maintain the momentum of improvements. Those with responsibility for each key stage are better placed to lead their staff teams and gain consistency of practice, as regular meetings have been introduced for training and development.

A number of strategies to improve teaching and learning have been introduced, including coaching for some teachers. Learning support assistants are better placed to help pupils learn because they now have regular opportunities to share teachers' planning and attend phase meetings. In addition, they have shared in assessment activities so have a clearer view of the learning targets for the pupils they support. A whole-school approach to marking and feedback has been introduced, linked to greater clarity in setting objectives for lessons. While leaders acknowledge that there is more work to do, consistency of approach is growing, as are the level and quality of pupils' responses to teachers' feedback.

Leaders have established a structured programme for teaching reading in Key Stage 2. This has an appropriate balance between reading and comprehension skills. Training, including the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make), has begun in order to improve teachers' skills in this area. Steps to improve pupils' writing include the introduction of timetabled lessons focusing on grammar, punctuation and spelling. Leaders recognise that a consistent approach to the teaching of spelling is needed. Some initial steps have been taken to improve learning in science with the introduction of more opportunities for investigative work.

There has been a significant improvement in the SGC's engagement with the school. Meetings are now held half-termly and have published agendas which include standing items such as safeguarding pupils. Members are much clearer about their roles and responsibilities and have high aspirations for the school. They have formed a small executive group to ensure that regular, first-hand checks are made on the school's performance. For instance, with senior leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair have shared in learning walks and scrutinised pupils' work to help measure the school's progress against the action plan.

Senior leaders and SGC members are working to increase engagement with parents. The school sought the views of parents immediately after the section 5 inspection and has acted on responses. For example, senior leaders now ensure that they are visible and available to parents for informal conversations at the beginning of the school day. SGC members are taking advantage of existing local groups, where some parents already meet, to gather views and share information.

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

External support

The SGC is keen to secure the necessary support for the school from Service Children's Education (SCE). Currently, the school is benefiting from the support of the SCE inspector-adviser in relation to leadership and management. Leaders appreciate the analytical support of the English consultant, more of which is planned for this term. The school benefits from links with the nearest SCE primary school, judged good at its most recent inspection, as well as an established pattern of meetings for subject leaders from all SCE schools on the island. This term, two teachers are due to attend the programme aimed at raising teaching from good to outstanding. Training and best practice visits to settings in the UK are planned for Early Years teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the SGC and the Director of Education, Service Children's Education.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector