

PROTECT-INSPECTION

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Mrs Victoria Evans
Headteacher
Akrotiri Primary School
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Cyprus

Dear Mrs Evans

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Akrotiri Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 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. As a matter of urgency, Service Children's Education (SCE) should take further action to:

- strengthen the school's leadership capacity through supporting the appointment of a deputy headteacher.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, members of the SGC and a representative of Service Children's Education. A telephone conversation was held with the Service Children's Education inspector-adviser prior to the visit. The school's action plan was evaluated. Visits were conducted to mathematics lessons in lower Key Stage 2, with the headteacher, and to the Early Years with both the headteacher and the assistant headteacher who leads this phase. Examples of Key Stage 2 pupils' writing in English and topic lessons were examined.

Context

The headteacher and the SGC have tried on two occasions to appoint a deputy headteacher without success.

Main findings

The headteacher, supported wholeheartedly by the SGC, has made raising the quality of teaching to at least good the school's central priority. Other priorities which were previously on the development plan have been deferred so the school can focus on getting its core business right. This restricted focus reflects, in part, the limits placed on senior leadership capacity that has resulted from the failure to recruit a deputy headteacher. The headteacher is taking appropriate steps to increase capacity at the level of middle leadership, firstly by concentrating on securing at least good teaching at this level. Nevertheless, the absence of a deputy headteacher is a significant gap that needs filling quickly.

A number of strategies have been implemented to improve teaching. For instance, a programme of coaching tailored to the needs of individual teachers has been established: leaders judge that this is having a positive impact. Training is underway to improve assessment in lessons, so that teaching is tightly focused on the next small steps pupils need to take in their learning. Pupils' writing workbooks show a consistent approach to stating at the outset of the lesson what pupils will practise and how learning will develop, as well as setting a challenge for the most able. These developments are supported by a clearer, agreed approach to giving pupils feedback through marking. Teachers' comments refer directly to what pupils have learned, as well as setting them challenges, for example to expand their ideas. Pupils are given time to respond to marking and to correct spelling errors. A consistent approach to marking spelling and grammar has been agreed, and recently extended to include the marking of pupils' topic work.

Steps have been taken to improve the quality of support provided by learning support assistants, including training on how to question pupils effectively. Teachers and learning support assistants are meeting more frequently to discuss the planned learning and more information is included in teachers' planning to help learning support assistants know what is being assessed.

The headteacher has taken helpful steps to improve provision for the most-able pupils. In some year groups, additional teachers are deployed effectively to provide more targeted teaching in mathematics. This term, separate groups have been introduced in writing for more-able pupils in Years 2 and 6.

The Early Years staff, who are all recent arrivals to the school, are developing a consistent approach to promoting children's learning as a result of some helpful management strategies. The Early Years leader ensures that teachers have time to

plan together and provides regular training for learning support assistants, to develop a shared understanding of how children learn. The way children's progress is now being assessed is developing adults' understanding of the stages in children's learning. Leaders recognise that assessment remains an area for development because staff are more secure in evaluating learning when adults lead activities than when children learn through independent activities. Work has been done to increase outdoor opportunities for children's early reading, number work and writing, although inclement weather meant it was not possible to see this in practice during this visit.

The members of the SGC are highly committed to improving the school's performance as rapidly as possible. Consequently, members are frustrated at the pace with which the appointments process moves and keen to recruit an outstanding deputy headteacher as soon as possible. The SGC has refined the way it works so that individual members take responsibility for monitoring particular aspects of the school's development work. Through attending training alongside staff, SGC members are clearer about what is expected of both staff and pupils. Consequently, they are better placed to evaluate the school's progress and hold leaders to account. Members feel that this way of working is more efficient in enabling them to focus on what is most important for pupils' learning.

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

SCE provides regular support and challenge to the headteacher, alongside specialist support for particular aspects of the school's work. For instance, support for developing provision for the youngest children is planned for later this term. The school benefits from opportunities to find out about good practice in other SCE schools in Cyprus as well and enable staff to see best practice in schools in the UK and attend relevant training there. This term, some teachers are due to attend a course designed to raise the quality of good teaching to outstanding.

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