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13 July 2017

Mrs Helen Lakey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lakey

Short inspection of Dhekelia Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your school was judged to be good in February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has been through a period of considerable instability since the last inspection, but your clear vision, and the fortitude with which you have tackled weaknesses since your appointment in January 2016, have brought about substantial improvement. You are determined that pupils receive the very best school experience possible. You have secured pupils' good progress in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, while giving them an improved, stimulating and broad curriculum. You are developing confident, respectful and polite pupils who are proud of their school. All of this will stand the pupils in good stead as the vast majority of them move on in the next few weeks to their new schools.

At the last inspection, inspectors identified two areas for improvement. The first of these was to improve pupils' progress in mathematics. The positive Year 2 and Year 6 outcomes in mathematics, in 2016, demonstrate the improvements made. Most pupils currently in the school, including the most able, are sustaining this good progress because of the strengthened teaching of mathematics. There remains a little variability in the quality of mathematics teaching across the school. However, you are taking effective steps to reduce this.

The other area for improvement inspectors identified was to develop the effectiveness of subject leaders. You have strengthened the leadership team with new appointments and given existing middle leaders opportunities and the guidance to help them develop their leadership skills. Leaders are shining a brighter light on

the quality of teaching and the curriculum, and the progress of groups of pupils, through the regular checks they make. They identify pupils at risk of underachievement and take effective action to ensure that teachers meet the needs of these pupils. However, not all leaders make an equally strong contribution to the quality of teaching in a wide range of subjects.

I was particularly interested to find out about pupils' progress in writing, as pupils' achievement in writing across all phases was weaker than in other subjects in 2016. You have accurately pinpointed what needs to improve and have made substantial headway with this issue. As a result, most pupils currently in the school, including boys, for whom attainment has been weaker, are making good progress. You know precisely where teaching has not been as strong and where a minority of pupils still need to catch up. You are taking effective action to address this.

Despite some turbulence in the school governance committee (SGC), governors have a wide range of appropriate skills and experience they bring to the table. You have encouraged the SGC to review and reorganise the way it works. As a result, governors know the school well and increasingly challenge leaders. Governors recognise that you, rather than governors, have driven improvements in governance. They understand the need to build sustainability in the strength of governance, so that regardless of changes in leadership, staffing and the pupil population, the SGC provides consistent and effective challenge and support.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) provides effective challenge and support to you and your team. Advisers keep a check on how the school is progressing. They identify precisely, based on a broad range of evidence, where further improvement is needed.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, the SGC and MOD have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. For example, checks on adults to make sure that they are suitable to work with children are robust. Adults are well trained and report any concerns they have that a child may be being harmed or at risk of harm, including from extremist ideas that could lead to radicalisation. The designated safeguarding lead is relentless in her care of the pupils.

Adults teach pupils how to stay safe. For example, they teach pupils how to be safe in the strong sunshine. I observed some of the youngest children being taught to use knives safely in the outdoors. Pupils understand the dangers associated with social networking. They know what to do if they experience bullying online. Pupils told me that any kind of bullying is rare, and that adults deal with it effectively. Relationships between adults and pupils are such that pupils have trusted adults they can speak to about any worries they may have. Furthermore, pupils support each other well, for example through the advice page of their newspaper.

The way the school promotes British values contributes much to pupils feeling safe

in school. For example, pupils learn a great deal about different cultures, religions and genders. The many pupils I questioned demonstrated understanding, tolerance and respect for these differences.

Inspection findings

- Provision for children in the early years is very strong. The foundation classes are well resourced and adults' skilful use and arrangement of these resources challenges children. Children concentrate, make choices, are not afraid to have a go at difficult tasks and persevere. They develop the attributes of effective learners that prepare them exceptionally well for Year 1.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the foundation stage has increased year-on-year and is above the England average. Furthermore, a good proportion of the most able children exceed many of the early learning goals. In 2016, no children exceeded the early learning goals in writing, despite doing so in reading and other areas of learning. The strong foundation stage leader has introduced a wide range of strategies to build children's vocabulary and knowledge of letters and sounds, and to engage them in writing across the areas of learning both inside and outside. As a result, all children make good progress in writing and the most able children are now surging ahead with their writing.
- You have rightly prioritised the teaching of writing across the age range, an aspect where pupils' outcomes have been weaker than in other subjects. Because of improvements in the quality of teaching, including extensive opportunities for pupils to write in a wide range of subjects other than English, almost all pupils in the school are working at least at an appropriate age-related standard. An increasing proportion of pupils are writing at greater depth. Most of those who were falling behind in their writing have caught up, and leaders and teachers have identified those pupils who still need to make more rapid progress where a little of the teaching, mainly in Year 1, has not been as strong.
- Most teachers make effective use of your chosen approach to using mathematics resources to help embed pupils' conceptual understanding of numbers and calculations. Teachers are challenging all groups of pupils, including the most able, with tricky mathematics problems. Pupils' reasoning skills are improving because teachers require pupils to explain their thinking as they solve problems. This has led to improvements in pupils' progress by the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2016. Pupils are sustaining this strong progress across the age range. A little teaching is less strong. You are keeping a close eye on this and with your other leaders are taking effective action to reduce any inconsistencies in the quality of mathematics teaching.
- You have taken robust action to tackle any weaknesses in teaching and leadership. You have appointed key new leaders and identified where there is potential to bring on middle leaders. You have set precise and appropriately stretching targets for staff in the best interests of pupils, resulting in the improved quality of teaching and leadership. When carrying out their checks, leaders focus sharply on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.

They keep a close eye on pupils who need to catch up. You are working with subject leaders across the curriculum to ensure that all make an equally strong contribution to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.

- You are passionate about pupils receiving a broad, balanced and deep curriculum, not just a narrow diet of reading, writing and mathematics. This is evident in the much-improved, stimulating and vibrant school environment, including the 'immersion' spaces, in which pupils of all ages value the opportunity to play and explore. Termly whole-school curriculum themes are a vehicle for improving the skills of middle subject leaders, improving teaching in non-core subjects and deepening pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, the recent 'splash of colour' project, which included an extended visit from a professional artist, fired pupils' imagination and enthusiasm for art and artists. This project helped pupils to produce work of high quality. It also helped the art leader to look deeply and broadly at the quality of teaching and pupils' developing skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and members of the SGC should ensure that:

- any remaining variations in the quality of teaching, especially in writing and mathematics, are reduced, so that more teaching matches the quality of the best
- leadership responsibility is shared yet further, and that leaders at all levels become consistently effective in the difference they make to pupils' progress in all subjects
- the organisation and constitution of the SGC is such that, regardless of changes, it consistently provides effective challenge and support.

I am copying this letter to the senior principal, MOD Schools and the chair of the SGC. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with you and other leaders throughout the inspection. I met with several members of the SGC and two representatives from the MOD. I briefly visited most classes with you and the teaching and learning coach to observe pupils' learning. Along with a group of leaders, I scrutinised a sample of pupils' workbooks and examined assessment information. I examined a range of documents including safeguarding information, the school development plan, leaders' notes of the checks they make on teaching, learning and assessment, and the school self-evaluation

summary. I considered 36 responses to the Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View, including 18 written responses, and 10 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the online pupil questionnaire, but I chatted with many pupils formally and informally throughout the school day.