

# Episkopi Primary School

British Forces Episkopi, BFPO 53, Cyprus

## Inspection dates

12–14 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is high and has been for several years.
- Pupils make outstanding progress during their time in the school as a result of the high-quality teaching they receive. The longer they stay the more progress they make.
- Teachers have high expectations that all pupils will achieve their potential and realise this expectation by giving them challenging work to do.
- Children in the nursery and Foundation 2 achieve well. The early years leader knows what needs to improve to help achieve even better outcomes and has clear plans for improving the outdoor area for learning.
- Strong levels of perseverance and high levels of concentration contribute much to pupils' learning and progress.
- There is no sense of complacency in this school. Leaders and managers, including members of the school governance committee, continually strive for excellence.
- The headteacher sets high expectations of staff and pupils alike. The sense of teamwork and pride in the school is strong from adults, pupils and their parents.
- Pupils are highly motivated by the rich, engaging learning experiences that capture their interests.
- Transition between schools is exceptionally well managed to ensure that no learning time is lost.
- Excellent links with the military community and wider support services on the island help the school to meet the needs of pupils and their families.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team was made up of two inspectors who inspected for two and a half days each.
- Inspectors observed over 20 lessons or parts of lessons across the school including short sessions of phonics teaching. Over half of observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or acting deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work in pupils' books. They listened to some pupils read and watched two assemblies.
- Inspectors met with a group of Year 6 pupils and talked to pupils during lessons, in the playground and as they moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, and other senior leaders, two members of the school governance committee and by telephone with the school's link inspector from Service Children's Education. Inspectors spoke informally with other members of staff.
- Inspectors took account of the 58 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke with a small group of parents who requested a meeting. The questionnaires completed by 60 members of staff were considered.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation which included: the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement; evidence about how teachers are set targets to improve pupils' progress and records of observations of the quality of teaching; minutes of meetings of the governing body; the school's information about pupils' progress over time; and records relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Jane Wotherspoon , Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Austin

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is a little larger than most schools in England although the number on roll is dropping at present. In common with all schools in Service Children's Education pupils join and leave the school at various times of the year as their parents are posted. On average, most pupils stay for about two years.
- The school serves the children of service personnel and a small number of civilian families based at Episkopi Garrison in Cyprus.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds with a very small number of Fijian pupils, mainly in the Nursery.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is about average. However, there are more with school action plus plans than in most schools in England.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The long-serving headteacher retired at the end of December 2012 and the long-serving deputy headteacher took up the appointment of headteacher from January 2013. The deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher roles are held in an acting capacity by existing staff.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children make outstanding progress by:
  - seeing through the planned improvements to the physical environment in the Nursery to enrich the learning opportunities available outdoors
  - making sure that children in Reception classes experience a better balance between activities that adults lead and those that children choose and lead for themselves.
- Ensure that the outstanding quality of teaching, assessment, marking and feedback found in English and mathematics is developed and applied consistently in other subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is high when compared with schools in England and other SCE schools. This has been the case for several years.
- In 2012, over half of pupils reached the higher level, Level 3, in reading and mathematics and a third reached this level in writing at the end of Key Stage 1. The picture is similarly positive at the end of Key Stage 2. Over half reached the higher level, Level 5, in English and almost half did so in mathematics. On average, pupils are about two terms ahead of pupils in England.
- Pupils did not achieve as well as expected in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2012. Since then the school has put in place a systematic programme throughout the school. Further checks show these pupils, now in Year 2, are catching up strongly. Pupils from Years 1 and 2 who read with inspectors demonstrated secure phonic knowledge to use when they encountered unfamiliar words. The school has also seen a dramatic improvement in pupils' spelling.
- There are no significant variations in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Whatever, their background, or starting point in the school, pupils make more progress than is expected from year to year so that over time their progress is outstanding. The learning of disabled pupils and those who find learning difficult is comparable with other pupils because of the well-targeted support they receive following a precise diagnosis of their needs.
- Pupils' strong skills in reading, writing and communication are used effectively in lessons in other subjects such as history and geography. Older pupils are enthusiastic about reading and read widely. Reading has a high profile around the school and teachers constantly encourage pupils to widen their experiences of different authors and to try a range of stories and poetry.
- Occasionally, progress is good rather than outstanding in lessons, more often in lessons other than English and mathematics. Frequently, however, the high ratio of adults to pupils helps pupils to make exceptional progress.
- Around the school there is much high-quality art work that makes a stunning and vibrant visual impression. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of artistic styles, resources and media. They learn artistic skills and techniques in a systematic and thorough way.
- Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. In nursery, children are learning to be independent, for example at snack times, and benefit from the large number of adults who help them to develop their physical skills in the outdoor area. Their early literacy skills are developing well and built on in Foundation 2, where the strong phonics programme means that children already recognise many sounds and use them to read words.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- When asked what was special about their school, a group of Year 6 pupils responded: 'teachers'. They went on to explain that 'teachers push you to the limit and help you all the way'. Indeed, teachers have high expectations of pupils to achieve the very best they can.
- The teaching of phonics has a high profile this year. Much is confident and assured with excellent practical resources that provide helpful visual prompts for pupils, especially for those for whom the learning does not come easily.
- Activities are frequently presented to pupils in an imaginative way through engaging scenarios. For example, imagining they were a passenger on *The Titanic* appealed greatly to both boys and girls in Year 5 and resulted in some high-quality written work.
- Teachers frequently plan interesting and memorable events, such as being invaded by some soldiers as part of the Year 3 'invasion day'. This generated great excitement for learning as well as helping pupils to understand a key historical concept.
- Teachers keep meticulous records of what pupils know, understand and can do already to ensure that lessons build on existing knowledge in a systematic way. In many cases, teachers modify the work for pupils through the range of well-prepared practical resources they provide.

They are alert to any potential misunderstandings, especially in mathematics where there is a strong focus on getting pupils to explain their thinking and their methods using precise mathematical vocabulary. Teachers often use paired and group work as a means of providing extra challenge and support for pupils.

- At their very best, lessons are exceptionally well structured and no time is wasted. Here, teachers build up pupils' learning in a step-by-step approach that skilfully balances the teaching of a specific skill with sufficient time to practise and apply it before moving on. Careful and precise questioning establishes pupils' understanding and, where necessary, teachers reshape the tasks to clarify pupils' understanding, or provide further explanations.
- Just occasionally, inspectors observed lessons where the pace of learning dipped slightly or there was an imbalance between the teacher's explanations and the time for pupils to practise skills.
- Much work has been done to improve the quality of marking and feedback to help pupils know how to improve their work. Pupils are expected to respond to their teachers' comments and most do. Marking in other subjects such as science, history and geography is developing well but not yet consistently at the high standard seen in English and mathematics.
- Regular homework helps to consolidate pupils' skills and learning in class. The school's website has an area for pupils to go for help with homework where they can see messages from their teachers.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, a systematic approach to checking children's learning and progress helps adults to plan a wide range of activities from which children choose in the nursery. Opportunities in the outdoors are not as extensive as the school would like. In Foundation 2 the organisation of the day is such that children's learning is interrupted for playtime with pupils in Key Stage 1 rather than providing a continuous structured learning experience. Here, at times, adults lead the children's learning too much.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Highly responsible behaviour is the norm so the small minority of pupils whose behaviour is not always exemplary stand out. Nonetheless, records show only a very small number of incidents over the course of the year and these are logged in meticulous detail. Very careful support and rewards for pupils who initially have difficulty meeting the school's high expectations of behaviour soon help them learn to manage and improve their own behaviour.
- Pupils are polite and well-mannered to visitors. In lessons, pupils listen attentively to each other and show each other a high level of respect. Play times are pleasant and well-focused with plenty for pupils to do.
- Pupils are highly motivated learners. They have a strong understanding of the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to improve. Many can point to the improvements in their work that come from the high-quality guidance they receive from their teachers. Termly discussions with their teachers help them to assess for themselves how well they have achieved. Target sheets in the front of pupils' books help them to constantly know what they are trying to achieve and they work hard to achieve it.
- Pupils have a strong sense of pride in the school. They are keen to take on various responsibilities as eco warriors, playground buddies, school councillors, members of the charities committee and the newsletter team. In all these roles, pupils help to make important decisions.
- Pupils feel safe. They are confident that there is very little bullying. Parents responding to Parent View are similarly positive. Pupils fall out with each other but situations are nipped in the bud very successfully so they do not escalate. Pupils use the worry boxes, secure in the knowledge that they will get a direct and immediate response from the headteacher.
- Transitions between schools are managed exceptionally efficiently and effectively so pupils settle very quickly. They told inspectors 'we make friends in seconds because everyone is so welcoming'.
- Attendance is average overall. The school is assiduous in following up individual dips in

attendance and in drawing very effectively on other agencies and services within the base to support families when necessary.

## **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- Although new to the role, the headteacher is building on her many years as deputy headteacher at Episkopi. Despite the temporary nature of several leadership roles, the momentum for improvement has not been lost. Indeed, the structures and systems that were already well-established to support and drive improvement have been strengthened as staff have relished opportunities to step up into slightly different roles.
- Other leaders are building on their previous roles too and many staff with responsibilities for leading others are part of a training programme. Phase leaders are accountable for the quality of provision in their phases and for the pupils' achievement. Responsibilities for checking that actions are having the desired impact have been spread to more staff. Hence, leadership is developing well at all levels because all teachers have some leadership responsibilities both as members of the curriculum teams and members of phase teams.
- Checks on the quality of teaching are regular and uncompromising. The headteacher sets high expectations of teachers, matched by support and guidance. Professional development and coaching are part of the school's systematic approach to developing the skills of all staff. Strong practice is shared and much thought has been given to the teaching partnerships in each year group so that teachers' skills complement each other.
- The school's detailed improvement plan, devised with contributions from all staff, is a thorough working document that draws everyone together and sets clear deadlines for actions as well as highly ambitious targets for pupils' achievement. Targets for teachers' performance this year are linked directly to the school's main priority to improve the quality of phonics teaching and to the amount of progress pupils make. Detailed plans show how the school intends to improve the physical environment in the nursery.
- Termly meetings held between leaders and teachers about the progress that pupils are making are underpinned by teachers' expert knowledge of their pupils. Meticulous systems for tracking pupils' progress ensures that any intervention can be swift if any pupils are not keeping up the high standards expected.
- The curriculum provides an exceptional breadth of experiences and events, including many cultural activities, which contribute significantly to pupils' learning and all-round personal development. The interesting and lively way that topics are introduced capture pupils' natural enthusiasm for learning. The school draws very effectively on the locality as a resource for the many learning experiences which help pupils to appreciate greatly their time in Cyprus.
- SCE has designated the school as one which needs only 'light touch' support. Indeed, staff from Episkopi frequently provide training and support for staff in other schools on the island.

### ■ **The governance of the school:**

Governance is in a state of flux at present with changes to the regiment bringing changes to some key roles on the school governance committee. Members bring wide expertise and experience to the role, along with a detailed knowledge of the families and of the services that can support the school. The headteacher provides detailed reports about the quality of provision and about pupils' achievements that enable committee members to ask the right questions. While it is clear that the committee challenges the headteacher to account for what pupils achieve, records of meetings do not always capture the depth of the discussions held. Members visit the school regularly and know well its strengths and the challenges it faces. They are actively involved in developing action plans with curriculum teams and in checking that policies and practice, including for safeguarding pupils' well-being, are kept thoroughly up to date.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132419
<b>Local authority</b>	Service Children's Education
<b>Inspection number</b>	397725

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	306
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Service Children's Education
<b>Chair</b>	Phil Robertson (acting chair)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carole Yates
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	March 2007
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