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Mrs Kay Garner
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Dear Mrs Garner

Short inspection of Episkopi Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 June 2018, accompanied by Claire Brown, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 the school was judged to be outstanding in March 2013.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Against a backdrop of high pupil and staff mobility, you have, since your appointment, pursued excellence in all aspects of the school's work. Whatever duration of time pupils may stay at Episkopi, they form strong relationships and quickly learn how to become resilient, reflective and resourceful – characteristics that will serve them well, wherever their life may take them next. Alongside strong academic outcomes, these 'learning habits' help pupils to develop into well-rounded individuals with a love for learning. As you state in your vision for the school, doing what is best for the children and families of the military community remains at the very heart of your work.

You and the staff team demonstrate an unwavering determination to continually improve. There has been no complacency in maintaining the very highest quality of teaching, behaviour and pupils' outcomes since the last inspection. All members of the school team, including the school governance committee (SGC), share a common 'restlessness' to continually reflect on, adapt and improve what they do for the benefit of pupils. As such, pupils receive an excellent quality of teaching and make substantial and sustained progress during their time at Episkopi. Many pupils exceed the expectations for their age.

You and the senior leadership team analyse and reflect upon pupils' outcomes regularly. This enables you to identify with precision the correct priorities for pupils, staff and the school. Your evaluation that boys, particularly in writing, and the most able pupils do not always reach their full potential, has led to targeted improvement work in these areas. Importantly, everyone buys into the initiatives you have undertaken. Staff feel trusted

and valued because 'collegiality' defines the professional culture of the school. You regularly consult the entire staff team about what the next steps for improvement should be. Teachers are open to receiving constructive criticism about their work because they know that through observing, critiquing and reflecting upon each other's practice they can secure a consistently high quality of teaching.

Pupils are an absolute credit to their parents, school and community. They are confident, articulate and eager to learn. They engage enthusiastically with the rich and varied experiences they receive across the curriculum because they are curious about the world around them. Pupils particularly enjoy the opportunities they have to sing, including through the school choir. One boy's comment was typical of many when he said, 'Singing is simply the best thing about school.' Overall, the high standards demonstrated in English, mathematics and science are equally matched across other areas of the curriculum, including the humanities, the arts and computing.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were tasked with making improvements to the quality of the early years provision. Leaders were also asked to ensure that the quality of teaching and assessment across the wider curriculum was just as strong as that in English and mathematics. These areas have been tackled head-on and with considerable success. The quality of the early years and the breadth and depth of the subjects and experiences offered to pupils are now considerable strengths of the school. They are notably worthy of wider dissemination across the Ministry of Defence (MOD) school community and beyond.

You have rightly recognised that some aspects of the school's work still need further attention. Our joint observations and work scrutiny confirmed your own evaluations that some teachers still perceive challenge for the most able pupils to mean an additional extension task, rather than a suitably challenging activity being planned from the very outset of the lesson. Equally, as a leadership team, you agree that sometimes you can be overly cautious in assessing that pupils are working at the highest standards of attainment, especially in writing. This means that some pupils' exceptional writing skills can go unrecognised.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. You and the staff team know the children and families that you serve exceptionally well. Trusting relationships and an open culture allow pupils and parents to share any concerns they may have. As such, you are quick to pick up on any issues that may arise, especially those relating to child protection. Where needed, referrals to more specialist support are swift and effective. Excellent liaison with speech and language therapists, welfare officers within the armed forces and the school's own team of emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs), for example, ensures that pupils receive the timely support they need in order to overcome their troubles and thrive at school. Parents provide particular praise for the quality of support provided to those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

You demonstrate a proactive approach to spotting potential risks and, as a staff team,

work quickly to educate pupils about the dangers they may face. For example, your joint work with the station and wider service community has raised pupils' and parents' awareness of the risks associated with the use of the internet and social media, including online gaming. Pupils themselves now act as e-safety champions, in school and at home.

As a leadership team, you are also alert to particular groups of pupils that may need specific personal, social and/or emotional support in order to reach their potential. An example of this has been your work around the mental health and well-being of boys. Dedicated time each week for individual pupils to talk about their feelings with an ELSA has allowed boys, in particular, to recognise the range of emotions they feel. Most crucially, they have been helped to cope more effectively with feelings such as anger or frustration. In turn, this has allowed pupils to focus more productively on their learning and make greater progress.

Inspection findings

- Children make an excellent start to their education in FS1 (Nursery). Skilled staff interact and engage with children as they play, knowing when to let children explore on their own and when a well-timed question, thought or suggestion would enhance children's learning further. Our joint observations showed the outdoor environment to be a hive of activity, with children purposefully engaged in the multitude of activities. Speech and language were particularly well promoted. All staff were observed getting down to child level when communicating, giving eye contact and modelling turn taking. The strong use of spoken and written models gives clear structure to children's learning. For example, the pictorial recipes for making items in the mud kitchen helped children to sequence their thoughts and actions successfully.
- Children continue to excel in FS2 (Reception). Staff build on children's experiences in FS1 and begin to introduce new, more sophisticated vocabulary. Reading, writing and early mathematics are prioritised, but not at the expense of other areas of learning. Children are particularly engaged by the exciting outdoor environment and the many challenges that are posed to pique their interest, such as 'Can you make a potion and then find a way to make it clear again?' Here, children are introduced to the concepts of filtering and are actively encouraged to use words such as 'substance' or 'dissolve'. There is no glass ceiling to what staff believe children can achieve in FS2.
- Boys' achievement has improved markedly over the last year. Your concerted efforts to improve the overall quality of teaching, as well as to design curriculum experiences that appeal to the interests of boys in your school, have paid dividends. The stronger performance of boys this year can be seen from the very earliest ages. One boy in FS2 was able to identify that the letters 'ie' could represent different sounds, such as in 'tie' and 'chief', while another was able to independently write words that contained two digraphs when challenged.
- Pupils' writing, while strong, has not reached as high a standard as their reading or mathematics over recent years, particularly among boys and especially those identified as most-able. You have introduced a number of new initiatives and ways of working to address this. English lessons now use a greater variety of texts, including those that you consider more appealing to boys, and draw on visual and moving image texts. You have also restructured your schemes of work so that pupils acquire

the prerequisite skills before being asked to apply them in real or imaginary contexts. As a result, attainment and progress in writing, for both boys and girls, is beginning to match that seen in reading and mathematics.

- The broad, varied and exciting curriculum is a strength of the school. Leaders and staff devote as much time and energy to planning, teaching and assessing the foundation subjects as they do with English and mathematics. Pupils' knowledge is developed progressively so that key concepts build and evolve as pupils move through the school. Specialist teachers of art, music and computing provide expert input so that pupils achieve exceptionally well. Excellent use is made of the locality to set learning in context, such as when pupils visited an archaeological site to develop their appreciation of the heritage of the island. These experiences, and many more, you rightly see as 'making memories'; important learning that pupils will be able to recall and draw upon no matter where in the world they continue their education.
- Members of the SGC are passionate about making a difference for pupils. They are known faces around school and within the community and bring a raft of expertise to their roles. You provide all of the right information to the SGC members so that they can ask pertinent questions about your work and make informed decisions about how quickly priority areas are being addressed. They make regular visits to school to learn more about the day-to-day work of pupils and staff. They offer significant support and challenge to you and your leadership team, especially as a new headteacher. Together, you have achieved much in a short space of time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and members of the SGC should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are appropriately challenged throughout lessons
- assessments of pupils' writing always recognise the features of performance at the highest standards of attainment.

I am copying this letter to the director of education services for MOD schools and the chair of the school governance committee. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Owston
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I discussed the work of the school with you, the senior leadership team, the assistant headteacher responsible for inclusion and welfare, five members of staff and the chair, vice-chair and three other members of the SGC. I also spoke to your school improvement partner from the MOD schools team. You and your deputy headteacher accompanied me on my visits to classrooms to observe teaching and learning and, together with one of the assistant headteachers, we evaluated the current standard of boys' writing in a sample of books. I scrutinised a range of other documentation, including your self-evaluation, improvement planning and recent information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also examined documents relating to your wider curriculum offer and the safeguarding of pupils. Eighty-six responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were reviewed. I also considered 66 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and 34 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire as part of the inspection process.