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Review of School Effectiveness (ROSE) Report – Episkopi Primary School

- Quality of Leadership at all levels – **Effective**
- Quality of provision and outcomes – **Effective**
- Safeguarding arrangements – **Effective**
- Overall – **School is Effective**

Context and Character

Episkopi Primary School is an above average sized primary school, situated within Episkopi Station, Cyprus. It provides education and care for the children of Service families and attached civilian contingent. The Resident Infantry Battalion (RIB) arrived in September 2024. Just under half of the school population joined to coincide with this change, which occurs every two years. Mobility of Service children is very high. RIB moves also contribute to high turnover of staff and increased training needs for replacement personnel.

Pupils are predominantly from White British backgrounds. There is a small contingent of children from regions such as Fiji, Africa and Nepal. Learners with English as an Additional Language (EAL) is well below the national average but rising. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in line with the national average but also rising. The school's motto, 'Curious and kind; have the courage to shine!' is embedded and embraced across the school.

What's it like to attend this school?

Children love coming to this friendly school. They enjoy and appreciate learning new things, such as music, alongside their many friends. Each day, staff give them a warm welcome. Given how many joiners and leavers there are, learners settle quickly and feel like family. Staff know their children remarkably well. All adults provide high-quality care and guidance. As a result, children are well cared for and feel safe.

Learners demonstrate highly positive attitudes towards their lessons and adore their teachers. As a result, pupils behave very well and engage in their learning. They know what is expected of them to achieve well and get the most of the many opportunities on offer. Pupils trust that adults will listen and sort out any issues quickly. For example, they are not worried about bullying. Pupils also appreciate the work of the school council to improve the learning environment.

Parents are exceptionally positive about this school and its strong reputation. Many commented on the range of opportunities and activities to support pupils' wider development. Parents also value the small class sizes. They also like how approachable leaders are and how kind all staff are. Parents feel their children are known as individuals and cherished. Relationships are warm and genuine. This creates mutual respect and a sense of partnership.

Quality of leadership at all levels – what's working well...

Senior leaders sustain high expectations for learners and staff alike. High ambition for every individual is clear through improvement planning work. For example, there is a clear focus on achieving more consistency within teaching, to improve pupil outcomes further. Senior leaders know their school extremely well. They prioritise the right things in the right order to make the most difference. Senior leaders are candid about what needs to improve and why, such as being more effective subject champions. They give staff important feedback and hold them stringently to account for their work. Staff feel valued and respected by leaders who take genuine care for their well-being, without compromising quality. As a result, there is a real sense of a team moving together with a clear sense of purpose.

Professional development is enhanced by an effective distributed leadership model. Leaders at all levels are encouraged to engage and seize opportunities. For example, the English team have 'picked up the baton' from the Head Teacher to lead collegially. Strong work to support individual subjects has spread to others. Subject champions now see and appreciate the benefits of changing their focus and ways of working. Middle leaders appreciate the opportunities to work with colleagues from the school improvement team and wider staff on island. Leaders see possibilities and take responsibility to improve themselves and the practice of others. Exceptional engagement with the Core Visit Programme, Leading Teacher Programme (LTP) and Professional Learning Community (PLC) underline a strong desire to improve teaching and learning. This is showing sustainable impact because it focuses on enhanced provision, teacher subject knowledge and on improving outcomes for learners.

Middle leaders are the 'engine room' of any school, driving innovation and output. They have become strong advocates for their subjects and the school. They have risen to the challenge set by senior leaders to make decisions, take responsibility and hold their colleagues to account. They continue to have positive impact through their ambitious actions. This they do through modelling, feedback and cascading training to colleagues. Middle leaders are responding to the culture created, focusing on improving their practice. The impact on learners is at its early stages but is important, nonetheless.

High mobility is a fact of life at Episkopi. Leaders embrace the challenge of high turnover, especially via a wholesale RIB move. Leaders have strong systems and procedures in place to both react and be proactive. It starts with high expectations, clear communications and a promise of partnership with families. Parents appreciate the information offered, the show rounds, meeting key staff and strong emphasis on children finding friends. Not every starter is related to the RIB. However, they receive the same equitable care and extensive offer to be included and welcomed into the school family. Building strong relationships and trust is key to the approach. Staff quickly ascertain pupil's starting points, gaps in knowledge and next steps so they can begin to succeed quickly.

Pupils receive a good deal in Episkopi. The well-considered learning experiences help children gain both the knowledge and the 'cultural capital' they need to be successful. For instance, strong work in both history and geography take full advantage of the locality and legacy. Teachers are fully aware of the advantages of small classes and maximise supporting children in the moment, ably supported by learning support assistants. Parents particularly appreciate the rich opportunities for music, sport, forest school and cultural development.

Leaders work hard to engage and develop positive relationships with parents. This work is always focused and purposeful, never superficial or incidental. This starts often before parents bring their children to school. Proactive work with communications and promises that are kept, build trust and establish partnerships. This is especially important for wholesale changes such as RIB moves. Staff, starting with the front office, listen and ensure parents' voices are heard and feelings respected.

Personal development is a real strength. Leaders work tirelessly together to make sure children receive the highest possible quality of education and care. Leaders have put together a well-considered programme to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. By using relevant resources such as Picture News, staff are able to engage and equip pupils in discussing key events. This helps them think about difference, commonalities and how issues affect them personally now and perhaps in the future. In addition to the wide range of trips and visitors, parents appreciate frequent access to the school nurse to discuss health and relationship issues if required. Pupils appreciate and benefit from the opportunities, such as the school council, an eco-hero or an office owl. This enables them to serve others and learn invaluable leadership and diplomacy skills.

Quality of leadership at all levels – even better ifs...

- The school revisits its vision and core values, so there is clarity and consistency for all stakeholders.

Why? There is a clear and embedded motto. However, having a vision underpinned by agreed and consistent core values, means there is a clearer sense of purpose and opportunity for stronger 'buy in'. Visions are driven by passion and ambition. They are reflected through genuine efforts to create tangible results. Joint work with stakeholders, particularly given the staff turnover, should unite them to a common understanding. This will allow leaders to ensure the vision, values and ethos are woven meaningfully into the curriculum and not just 'caught'. It will also allow for Governors to support and challenge leaders on the impact of this important work.

Quality of provision and outcomes – what's working well...

The Head Teacher took on the lead for English after a colleague left. She has rightly prioritised the teaching of writing and improving 'sentence level work'. In short order she has assembled a new English team to continue this work. This is a hallmark of the senior leaders' approach – model what they want, coach and mentor new leaders and empower them. Once fully established, they can support and challenge them to deliver the consistency and quality expected.

The school has strengthened its approach to early reading following a dip in the 2022 phonics outcomes. Pupils are now doing better than previously. Leaders introduced a systematic synthetic programme and worked hard with staff to deliver it with fidelity,

precision and confidence. They use assessment appropriately to check for gaps in learning so they can identify the areas to catch-up on quickly. Staff ensure there is well-targeted help to any pupil who may struggle to read, including new joiners after Year 1 who may not have passed the phonics screening check. Staff are very well supported through coaching, mentoring and feedback to deliver the agreed strategies. As a result, outcomes have risen significantly to now be in line with national averages.

Reading is prioritised. Leaders have focused on 'phonics to fluency' to improve accuracy and automaticity. They have created a reading spine of high-quality texts that link meaningfully to children's topics and interests. Leaders see reading as both fundamental to school improvement strategies but also improving children's writing. They continue to strengthen planning, including identifying key vocabulary, but leaders know there is more to do to codify the 'what' - exactly what should be learned (also known as the 'intent'). Staff foster a love of reading so that learners can talk about their favourite books with enthusiasm. Leaders have supported parents to understand phonics including how best they can support their own children and encourage reading at home for pleasure.

Senior leaders empower and encourage middle leaders to prioritise improving their own subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. This represents a cultural shift as it has harnessed existing strengths and overcome initial resistance to some changes. This has meant staff being honest and exposing their weaknesses to colleagues. Over time, what is has done has strengthened relationships, raised expectations and helped a shared ownership. For instance, the LTP has contributed to the 'fertile ground' senior leaders have established for staff to flourish. The 'art of the possible' is discussed, debated and implemented. This is leading to incremental improvement for all staff. Leaders at all levels feel entrusted and optimistic to take responsibility for their own career development.

Pupils achieve well. For children leaving the early years (Reception Year), eight out of ten achieve a good level of development (GLD), helping make them ready for more complex work in Year 1. Pupils in key stage 1 and 2 leave in line with the national average for the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. This is significant given the very high turnover of children. All pupils learn the intended broad and balanced curriculum, which is reflected in published outcomes. Leaders have high ambition for every pupil. They continue to work hard to refine their curriculum, to ensure it has the essential knowledge, disciplinary rigour and clear end points at every step. This will help sharpen their assessment procedures to check and challenge exactly what pupils know and remember, so they can address gaps and adjust future teaching accordingly. That said, pupils generally have a secure long-term recall of the content covered.

Pupils produce work of high-quality, more so in core subjects. The teaching is rigorous and more consistent. Pupils build on their prior learning more securely and are able to apply new knowledge to existing concepts. They are made to think deeply and work hard in lessons. In non-core subjects there is more variation, which leaders know and are addressing. Pupils are able to read at age-appropriate levels and are confident to articulate their answers, ideas and explanations. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their learning, wherever this may be.

Strong communication is appreciated by parents and staff alike. They also appreciate the open-door policy for senior leaders to feel connected and accessible. Parents also feel well-versed in what goes on in school and how they can help support learning at home. The Deputy Head Teacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator

(SENCo), prioritises clear communications with pupils, parents and professionals alike. This open and transparent approach builds trust and keeps everyone informed, when co-producing individual support plans. This is important as full disclosure of needs and professional involvement is not universally forthcoming on arrival.

Leaders set high expectations in everything they do. This is especially true for pupils with SEND. They are well supported in class because staff have high aspirations for them and work hard to make learning more successful through adaptive teaching strategies. In lessons, pupils show a high level of self-control and learning proceeds without unnecessary interruption.

Pupils behave very well. This is because pupils understand the high expectations and rules. They work hard to achieve them and take personal responsibility. They quickly understand the routines and make sensible choices. Behaviour for learning is a particular strength. Eager learners take full advantage of the opportunities to do their best. The school espouses kindness, and pupils respond with integrity and gusto. As a result, there is a very positive and respectful school culture. Pupils learn in a welcoming environment in which they feel safe and valued. Pupils are supported to make friends and develop a sense of belonging.

Pupils maintain very positive attitudes to their learning. They know how to learn effectively and take pride in both their school and achievements. This positivity is evident throughout the school. Learners love to talk about their work, experiences and achievements.

Quality of provision and outcomes – even better ifs...

- Leaders set out the detailed intent for every subject to match the stronger subjects.

Why? The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned in all non-core subjects. In these, it is not yet fully clear what pupils should learn and when, to build their knowledge and vocabulary over time. Leaders should ensure the curriculum continues to be developed so there is clarity about what pupils should know and be able to do in all subjects across the school. This will then help shape more effective assessment practices to check what essential content has been learned or not.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are well trained. For example, they understand what constitutes a low-level concern about an adult, what to be vigilant for and how to follow concerns up. This is because the use of scenarios and keeping issues at the forefront of staff's minds are prioritised. This approach contributes to an open and vigilant culture. The school is aware of the potentially overwhelming flow of information relating to safeguarding, both into and out of the school given the turnover. There are clear and sensible child protection arrangements to mitigate this. Furthermore, senior leaders work closely with local safeguarding partners to keep their practices under constant review and share intelligence so they can challenge and support families even better.

Gareth Flemington

Governance and Performance Lead

School	Episkopi Primary School
Unique Reference Number	132419
Head Teacher	Natalie Johnston
Review dates	3 and 4 December 2024
Location	Episkopi BFPO 53, Western Sovereign Base Area (Cyprus)
Local Authority	Defence Children Services
Type	Primary
Age Range	3 to 11
Number of pupils on the school roll	288
Chair of School Governance Committee	Squadron Leader Gareth Hodgson
Website	https://www.episkopi.modschools.org/
Date of previous Ofsted inspection	19 June 2018

Information about the school

- The Head Teacher took up post in June 2021.
- Episkopi is an above average sized primary school. It serves the children of the British Forces and civilian families based at Episkopi Station.
- Nursery children in Foundation Stage 1 attend the feeder Early Years Setting. Foundation Stage 2, which caters for children aged 3 to 4, are on site.
- In common with other Ministry of Defence schools, the number of pupils who join or leave other than at normal times is very high, due to Resident Infantry Battalion (RIB) changes every two years.
- Pupils with English as an Additional Language are well below the national average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are in line with the national average.
- There is very high mobility, with 44% new pupils since September 2024. Over one third of the school population turns over from the RIB change every 2 years. Staff turnover is high, often affected by the RIB change.

Information about this review

- Reviews are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of the school's education provision and care.
- The Head Teacher presented to the review team about the school's context, challenges, successes and how high mobility of pupils are mitigated.
- Reviews held discussions with the Head Teacher, SENCo, Governors and other staff.
- Reviewers discussed the curriculum with the school, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of Safeguarding, the Lead Reviewer met with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, took account of the views of staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture that puts pupils' interests first.
- Reviewers observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during breaktime and lunchtime. We also took time to speak to pupils both informally and formally about behaviour and their wider personal development.
- Reviewers considered responses from surveys conducted by the school as part of their business as usual. Reviewers also spoke directly with parents and representatives of the School Governance Committee.

Review Team

Gareth Flemington (Lead Reviewer)	Governance and Performance Lead, UK
Simon Hayes	Deputy Head Teacher, Episkopi Primary
Caroline Neal	Head Teacher, Hornbill School, Brunei
Andy Yeoman	Assistant Head (Education-Standards-Professional Development)