

Afnorth International School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132412
Local Authority	Service Children's Education
Inspection number	362990
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Bradley Simmons HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Ministry of Defence
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	Ministry of Defence
Chair	Major Adrian Scott
Headteacher	Ms Sheena MacLeod
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). Inspectors carried out fifteen lesson observations covering ten teachers. They met with senior leaders, staff, a group of pupils, the Chair of the School Governance Committee and the school counsellor. They looked at pupils' exercise books, work folders and portfolios, reading records, school data about pupils' attainment and progress, monitoring records, safeguarding and child protection documentation and the school improvement plan. They considered 47 parental questionnaires as well as questionnaires returned by the majority of pupils and eight staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The extent to which teaching and the curriculum are effectively geared to maximising boys' attainment, particularly in writing.
- The effectiveness with which the school is tackling variations in teaching, and learning and progress within each year group and the variability in outcomes for higher attainers noted at the previous inspection.
- Work within the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 to address the issues underlying the drop in children's performance in 2010 across key profile scales.
- The rigour of safeguarding procedures and the effectiveness with which the British Section work with the international community at Afnorth to keep its pupils suitably safeguarded.

Information about the school

Afnorth International School provides education for 990 pupils aged from 3 to 18 years. It serves the military community of Joint Force Command Headquarters at Brunssum, close to the German border in the Netherlands. Four nations sponsor the school: Canada, Germany, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Each nation provides a national section headteacher and a group of representatives from each country governs the school. The role of the School Governance Committee of the British section is necessarily limited by these strategic, whole-school arrangements.

In the British section, pupils aged between three and eleven are taught in multi-national classes by American, Canadian and British teachers. Sixteen of these pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, largely for speech and communication difficulties. Seven pupils speak English as an additional language. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups within the British section. In common with all Service Children's Education (SCE) schools, the proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at times other than usual is very high.

During this inspection, inspectors observed teaching and learning in those classrooms where classteachers are employed by SCE, and evaluated the attainment and progress of all British pupils at the school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Afnorth is a good school which has improved since its previous inspection. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are tackling the latter with determination. The school's capacity to improve further is firstly demonstrated by the work that the school has achieved to date to improve boys' interest in, and adeptness at writing. This work is already having a positive impact and standards of attainment for boys in writing have begun to rise.

The second piece of evidence that augurs well for further improvement is the successful drive by the headteacher and senior leaders since the previous inspection to strengthen the quality of teaching across the school. All parents who returned questionnaires believe that teaching is good at this school and, very largely, it is. There remains some variability from class to class. Planning is not consistently geared to push higher-ability pupils. In addition, one parent felt that, despite the school doing a good job, the focus on addressing their child's special needs was not sufficiently strong. Inspectors agree that the individual targets of pupils with special needs and/or disabilities are not always clearly reflected in lesson planning.

Questioning techniques used during the best lessons keep the great majority of children alert and engaged in learning but this is not yet a general feature of teaching at Afnorth. Oral and written guidance that clarifies for pupils the steps they need to take to improve their work is inconsistent.

The care, guidance and support for pupils at Afnorth are exceptional. Pupils are known very much as individuals. There is very strong working between agencies to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. Some parents view the school as a haven which helps them and their children to settle in the community. The work of the school counsellor is pivotal. He is an advocate for pupils and his work boosts their confidence and self-esteem.

The Early Years Foundation Stage gets children off to a flying start. Provision is built on high-quality planning which ensures that children benefit from a rich, balanced and varied curriculum. Children across the Early Years Foundation Stage are now enjoying an often exciting outdoors learning environment. The school is aware that this resource should be available to children for greater periods of each day. The outdoors does not entirely reflect balanced provision across each of the six areas of early learning.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the remaining variability in the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - focusing planning more precisely on the needs of higher-ability pupils and those pupils with special needs and/or disabilities
 - improving oral and written feedback to pupils so that they have a clearer understanding of the next steps in learning
 - honing questioning strategies to ensure the active engagement of a larger proportion of pupils during each lesson.

- Extend opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to use the outdoors and ensure that outdoor provision fully reflects the six early years areas of learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

One parent noted: 'My son has attended Afnorth for two and a half years and there has never been a day when he hasn't been anything other than 100% enthusiastic about going to school'. Indeed pupils do enjoy their education at Afnorth and this leads to them achieving well overall. Regardless of their ethnicity, or whether they have special educational needs and/or disabilities or speak English as an additional language, pupils' learning and progress is good. They display a willingness to participate, a cooperative spirit and, at times, a near total absorption in their learning. Inspectors saw pupils swell with satisfaction in their achievements. For example, during one lesson, the teacher capitalised on the dramatic abilities of a boy who finds writing challenging. The pupil acted the part of a troll, and took questions from his classmates. At the end of the question and answer session, pupils rushed off to write descriptive phrases about the troll. Noteworthy was the enthusiasm of boys for this writing. Such work is contributing to narrowing the gap between girls' and boys' performance in writing at the school.

In and out of classrooms, pupils behave well, get on well with each other and with other nationalities and they have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They feel safe at school and well supported if things go wrong for them. More parents had reservations about the school enabling their child to be healthy than any other area. One parent felt the school offered too little vigorous physical activity, another that too much was demanded of pupils. Here, HMI believe that the school has got the balance right. Regularly each week, pupils' heartbeats are raised for sufficiently long enough to build stamina and fitness. Pupils enjoy this and know that it is important. One in seven parents commented on what they perceived to be the highly processed nature of food from the school canteen. A perusal of menus demonstrates that parents have some justification for their criticisms. There appears to be too little fresh produce available for pupils. Fried food was available on both inspection days.

Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school and beyond. They attend

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Remembrance services around the locality and raise substantial amounts of money for local charities. For example, every pupil takes part in the annual 'Terry Fox' fun run to raise money for a local Dutch cancer charity.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching at Afnorth is typically good. Teachers' strong subject knowledge underpins good teaching in two ways. Firstly, teachers are able to draw upon and use correct terminology in their teaching, and to demand that pupils use correct terminology also. Secondly, a confidence in subject knowledge lends an energy to the way in which teachers engage their pupils, so many lessons move at an interesting and absorbing pace. In the best lessons, teachers bring their classes together at regular intervals to check on pupils' achievements and understanding. They refer back to the success criteria that they discussed with pupils at the beginning of the lesson so that pupils understand the degree to which they have succeeded. Noteworthy are teachers' typically high expectations of lower-ability pupils, which inspire these pupils with a 'can-do' attitude. Some outstanding individual support and teaching for pupils with special educational need and/or disabilities was observed during this inspection, rooted in a very clear understanding of individual pupils' needs.

The British section skilfully weaves its own curricular priorities through the whole school international curriculum. To give an example, during the inspection Year 4 were studying the Romans and this theme was being used as a springboard for raising boys' interest in writing. Boys were enabled to model and dramatise aspects

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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of the topic using toys. They were writing job descriptions and applications for the post of a Roman centurion. This multi-sense approach to writing meant that the boys relished the tasks and were very productive. Overall, the curriculum is well balanced with children enjoying enough time to practise and develop their basic skills. The curriculum is enhanced by specialist teaching, for example of modern foreign languages. Pupils are taught German in ability sets. The curriculum is interesting and well focused on ensuring pupils have plenty of opportunities to speak the target language. Teaching is of high quality so pupils reach high standards in oral use of the language.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leadership team work effectively to keep the work of the school under review. They sample teachers’ planning to evaluate provision and assessment, conduct regular scrutiny of pupils’ work to assess progress and standards of attainment, and undertake regular lesson observations. Importantly, they act on their findings, intervening where necessary to secure improved quality. This commitment to securing better outcomes for all underpins the school’s effective promotion of equal opportunities and is exemplified by work to ensure that boys attain more highly in writing.

The strategic school improvement plan, which underpins the work of all sections within Afnorth, contains insufficiently specific outcome targets. In addition, it is not accurately costed and monitoring and evaluation procedures lack clarity.

The School Governance Committee has a reduced function in this school and a limited role in monitoring and evaluation. Nevertheless, its members are good advocates for the school who support the school and carry out their duties soundly. The school provides a good and regular stream of information to parents about their children’s achievements. Reports show whether a child is working below, at or above expected levels, but do not give the precise national curriculum sub level in reading writing or mathematics at which the child is working.

Safeguarding arrangements are secure and meet requirements. Staff are carefully checked at several levels for their suitability to work in a services’ school, and have received appropriately regular safeguarding training. The school has clear procedures for recording issues surrounding child protection and works well with other SCE

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agencies to safeguard its pupils.

The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. The international dimension of the school is well developed and work within the local community is good, but pupils have a limited view of the range and principles of beliefs and cultures that they will encounter if they return to Britain.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	NA

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Foundation Stage 1 (FS1) with skills and abilities that are broadly as expected for children of this age. They experience very well focused provision which supports and stretches children. As a result, they make good and, at times, outstanding progress. Provision in Foundation Stage 2 (FS2) is satisfactory. In 2010, children’s performance in key areas such as linking sounds to letters showed some inconsistencies. The school, working with a consultant from SCE, is tackling these issues vigorously and has now, for example, introduced more systematic teaching of phonics and regular assessment of children’s skills in this key area. A scrutiny of children’s writing demonstrates that, in FS2, opportunities for children to write are insufficiently regular to ensure that they make optimum progress in this area.

Provision across the Early Years Foundation Stage is underpinned by detailed planning. This is judiciously balanced between adult-led activities, child-initiated activities and elements which build on the children’s observed interests. Indoors, a rich environment which reflects the six early learning areas motivates and enthuses children. For FS1, a parent communication board shows what is going on in each area. This helps parents key in to their children’s learning. Effective adult-led activities encourage children to think, do, predict and, at times, speak at length.

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Practitioners model spoken language well and encourage, where appropriate, children with speech and language difficulties to repeat. A particular strength across the Early Years Foundation Stage is the good emphasis on developing children’s mathematical language.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is a reflective practitioner who has a good professional understanding of this age range. She has worked determinedly to implement the framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage across the three FS2 classes. There is evidence, for example, in the improved outdoor environment, that she has experienced success in this endeavour.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

All parents who returned questionnaires are overwhelmingly satisfied with the school. Parents regard this school as caring and supportive, and the staff as approachable. The few parental criticisms were offered constructively, and where HMI agree that these concerns are indeed issues, such issues appear as judgements in the body of the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Afnorth School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 104 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	66	16	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	77	11	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	21	45	25	53	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	51	21	45	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	53	20	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	19	40	28	60	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	30	23	49	6	13	2	4
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	30	23	49	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	21	45	25	53	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	43	24	51	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	38	27	57	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	51	20	43	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	28	60	19	40	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Afnorth International School, BFPO 28, Netherlands

Thank you for the welcome and help you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed our visit very much.

We found that your school has improved since it was last inspected. It is a good school. This will not surprise you, as your parents feel the same. Your headteacher and other senior leaders are working hard to ensure that it continues to improve. We found that teaching is generally good and we were very pleased to see that boys are doing better in writing across the school because of the interesting way in which it is taught.

For most of the time you find your lessons really absorbing. This is because most of your lessons are well taught. We have asked your teachers to fine tune one or two areas for you. We think it would be useful if teachers relied less on 'hands up' and instead named individuals to answer. We believe this would keep more of you alert and learning for longer periods during lessons. Some of you did not know the steps you have to take to improve your work, so we have asked your teachers to give you more guidance during lessons and when they mark your books. Please make sure you read their marking – perhaps you could write a reply to show that you know what to do next!

We have asked your teachers to make sure that they plan to stretch those of you who are higher attaining. We would also like your teachers, when they plan lessons, to think more about the individual targets of those of you who need particular help to do well.

We found that your school cares for you in an exceptionally good way, and we could see how much you appreciate this and enjoy being there. Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Bradley Simmons
Her Majesty's Inspector

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