

Akrotiri Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132415
Local Authority	Service Children's Education
Inspection number	312118
Inspection dates	27–29 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Jane Wotherspoon 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	337
Appropriate authority	Service Children's Education
Chair	Group Captain Barrie Thomson
Headteacher	Mrs Julia Dowdeswell
Date of previous school inspection	October 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. Inspectors observed 18 teachers during the course of 25 observations which included short drop-ins to lessons as well as longer observations. They held meetings with the headteacher and key staff, the Chair and other members of the School Governance Committee and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including: safeguarding documents and policies; school improvement plans; minutes of meetings held by the school governance committee; teachers' lesson plans; and data on the pupils' attainment and progress over time. They analysed questionnaires from pupils, from staff and 124 from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which changes in staffing, organisation, and leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage have enabled the school to address issues of inadequate provision and improve it to a good level.
- How well changes in management structure have enabled leaders of all levels to contribute to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The extent to which teaching has improved to have a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress, especially in mathematics and for boys.
- How effective assertive mentoring has been in helping pupils to understand what they are learning and how to improve their work.

Information about the school

Akrotiri Primary School serves the children of the British Forces and attached civilians based at RAF Akrotiri. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. A smaller than average proportion of pupils has been identified as having special educational needs. 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, pupils stay at the school between two and three years. Since the previous inspection there have been some significant changes in staffing, including the appointment of a new headteacher in spring 2010 and the redistribution of leadership roles.

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

A distinctive feature of this good school is the outstanding support for pupils' smooth transition in and out of the school. Very thorough and well-established procedures ensure that pupils settle quickly. Their well-being is monitored very closely in the first few weeks at the school. The school's excellent work with other support agencies on the island contributes significantly to the effectiveness of the support for pupils whose circumstances may prevent them from learning as well as they could. Parents report a high level of confidence in the way the school looks after their children and cares for them. Pupils, too, are happy and feel safe in school.

A range of strategies have been introduced to improve teaching and support pupils' learning. Much teaching is good and having a positive impact on pupils' good learning and progress. However, leaders are aware of pockets of satisfactory teaching where strategies for assessing pupils' learning are not yet embedded fully and used to best effect. Some teaching is outstanding and serves as a model for others to follow; it is inspirational and highly motivating for pupils. The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (F1 and F2) has improved considerably since the last inspection. It is now good and children make a positive start to school life.

Strengths in the curriculum include many varied opportunities through visits, themed weeks, and joint work with other schools which have a positive impact on pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils develop into mature, sensible young people who show a strong awareness of the needs of others. They develop personal qualities that will stand them in good stead for the future. Their role in decision making and opportunities to take a range of responsibilities in the school is underplayed. They have the potential and capacity to take on more responsibility and make a stronger contribution to their school and wider community. Their knowledge and awareness of communities beyond their own is a weaker aspect of personal development. By contrast, spiritual, moral and social development are strong.

The headteacher provides strong leadership for the school's improvement. Her support, coaching and mentoring of senior staff and those with leadership roles has been highly influential. Although leaders are involved extensively in monitoring the work of the school and in planning actions for improvement, their skills of evaluating the impact of those actions are still developing. Nonetheless, all leaders share the headteacher's vision for the school and, along with members of the school governance committee, have played their part in driving the school's improvement since the previous inspection. The transformation in the quality of provision in

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Foundation Stage 1 and Foundation Stage 2, improvements in the quality of teaching and the better outcomes for pupils are indications of the school's good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency in the quality of teaching by embedding assessment strategies further and disseminating the outstanding practice in the school.
- Strengthen opportunities for pupils to contribute to their own and the wider community through:
 - taking a stronger role in taking responsibility for and making decisions about school life
 - building their knowledge of communities that are different to and beyond their own.
- Sharpen the diagnostic and analytical skills of other leaders in evaluating the impact of their actions on the quality of provision and the outcomes for pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

With the exception of 2010 where there was a dip, results of tests in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 show that attainment is typically above that of most schools, especially in English. Notably, a good proportion of pupils attains the higher level, Level 5, in tests. This positive picture can be seen in the work of the current Year 6 and in year groups coming through the school. The school has identified some differences in the attainment and progress of boys and girls in some years in the past. The progress of individual pupils is tracked very carefully to ensure that they sustain the good progress required to meet the challenging targets set by teachers. Any dips in progress are identified quickly and rectified through additional support, intervention or challenge. The school has rightly prioritised mathematics this year following its successful focus on improving writing.

In lessons observed there was no significant difference in pupils' attitudes for learning. Engagement, motivation, active involvement and participation levels were good for both boys and girls and for the small numbers of pupils identified as having special educational needs. Any variations in progress between classes is linked to the quality of teaching rather than to any difference in gender, background or ability. Good relationships underpin effective collaborative work including in mixed groups. Behaviour for learning is consistently good and pupils' commitment to working well is a clear factor in their progress. They show interest and enthusiasm, even when teaching is not exciting. Pupils are articulate and able to explain their ideas and express their feelings and emotions. The assertive mentoring programme is having a profound impact on pupils' understanding of what they are learning and what they need to improve. This programme of clear target setting that stems directly from pupils' own work provides them with a strong sense of themselves as learners. It also helps new pupils to sustain progress. Specific programmes of intervention for those with additional learning needs help them to focus on the small steps in

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learning identified in their individual plan.

Pupils report feeling safe in school and are confident that staff will listen if they have a problem. Pupils say bullying is rare although it has existed in the past. Pupils show awareness of safety in the playground, using the plentiful and challenging equipment sensibly. Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming, both to new pupils and to visitors. They understand and respect the values of the school and behave well without the need for constant supervision. The school council is being re-energised, having faltered as a means of promoting the pupils’ voice in the school. Responsibilities, such as being buddies for new pupils, are undertaken well but are not extensive. Pupils willingly embrace the experiences that living in a foreign country bring and, for example, learn about the history of the divided island. However, their understanding of other cultures nationally and globally are not so strong.

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	2
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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Some aspects of teaching are consistent. The learning environment is vibrant and stimulating. Without exception teachers use displays of pupils’ work and ideas effectively as prompts for learning. Key vocabulary and displays of the key features of writing support pupils’ independence. Assertive mentoring and target setting complement each other and teachers’ marking tells pupils what they need to improve next. At the end of lessons teachers frequently return to the lesson’s objectives and ask pupils to assess for themselves what they can do now, what they understand and what they need support to achieve. Some teachers refer constantly to pupils’

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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targets and modify tasks as the lesson proceeds to ensure just the right level of challenge. However, it is the extent to which these features are embedded in teachers’ practice that accounts for the remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

Lesson planning is often detailed and builds on what pupils have learnt previously. However, joint planning does not always bring about the same outcomes in parallel classes. This is because some teachers are more adept at recognising during lessons when tasks need further modification to meet pupils’ needs. At times teaching is over-directed; teachers dominate the talk and give pupils too little time to respond. Teaching assistants are effective at supporting groups but not so well deployed during whole-class teaching.

Curriculum planning is currently undergoing some review to bring subjects together into a coherent and simple structure. Nonetheless, in practice, pupils enjoy a wide range of rich and memorable experiences that enable them to apply their skills across subjects and contribute much to their personal development. Enrichment activities are especially strong. Joint projects with local schools include programmes for pupils with particular gifts and talents. The programme for physical education is strong and the arts are covered well. The support for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed and has a positive impact on their learning and progress. Effective assessment ensures that no time is lost in establishing an appropriate programme of work for them when they start school.

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’s clear vision for the school’s improvement, to which staff are committed, is captured in the single improvement plan. She has managed difficult staffing decisions sensitively without compromising on the aim of securing improvement in the quality of provision. The quality of teaching has improved, with much that is good and some that is outstanding. Much thought has gone into pairing teachers in year groups so that they can coach and support one another to tackle remaining inconsistencies. Importantly, leadership roles are increasingly spread among other staff who are developing their skills in monitoring and evaluating the school’s provision to support the drive for improvement.

Assessment information is used effectively to monitor pupils’ progress. Pupils’

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performance is analysed thoroughly to ensure that no group is achieving better or worse than any other. Any slips in progress are identified quickly so that appropriate action can be taken before gaps widen. The school is monitoring closely the progress of boys in relation to girls to ensure that all pupils have equal chances to succeed. Termly meetings to discuss pupils’ progress hold staff accountable for the outcomes of pupils in their class.

The school governance committee has been restructured since the last inspection to strengthen the role of members in asking challenging questions of the school’s leaders. Members are clear about their roles and responsibilities and increasingly influential in school improvement. They gain good awareness of the school’s strengths and areas for improvement from the headteacher’s accurate and informative reports which are supplemented well by their own visits to the school.

Tight procedures for carrying out assessments of risks to pupils’ health, safety and well-being ensure that the environment is one in which parents can have confidence. Record keeping systems are robust. Adults are trained appropriately in child protection issues and checked carefully to ensure their suitability to work with children. The strong sense of community and of belonging to the school can be seen in the good relationships that underpin the positive working atmosphere. However, links with communities beyond the school, including a range of cultures and traditions in the United Kingdom, are not so well established. The school keeps parents well-informed about activities and events through regular newsletters and bulletins on the school’s website. Parents are involved strongly when their children start school and, increasingly, in the homework tasks set.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in Foundation Stage 1 and Foundation Stage 2 clearly enjoy the varied and

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interesting activities provided. The setting bears no resemblance to that described in the last report because key weaknesses from that time have been tackled with rigour. Leaders have been effective in raising expectations and building consistency. The learning environment is stimulating and well resourced, giving children a wide range of opportunities to support their learning. The current focus on early mathematical learning is a good example. Children are immersed in resources and displays for this area of learning wherever they go.

Teaching is good and adults take every opportunity to engage with the children, promote their talk and encourage them to make choices. All adults are well briefed and clear about the focus for learning in each session. Children settle in well, and show by their enthusiasm and willingness to explore the environment that they feel comfortable and secure in the setting. Communications with parents are good and leaders are proactive in reaching out to parents who may not be able to visit the setting on a daily basis.

These good features in provision mean that children’s learning and development is promoted well and their achievement is good. They build well on their starting points, which are lower than the expectations for their age. By the time they transfer to Year 1, the children’s attainment is similar to that found in most schools nationally. Leaders provide relevant training and coaching for staff to ensure a consistent approach. The approach to teaching children about letters and sounds, to support their early reading and writing skills, is a good example. Appropriate systems are in place for observing and recording the small steps in children’s learning. Leaders recognise the need to strengthen the evaluation of children’s progress during the year to make further modifications to the provision.

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

The proportion of questionnaires returned was slightly above average. The majority of parents are positive about their children’s experience at Akrotiri. Parents were especially positive about children’s enjoyment of school and how well they are looked after. Many parents took the opportunity to add positive comments. The few negative comments did not form any pattern and concerns were individual. Inspectors followed up comments where possible and, where appropriate, discussed the nature of the issue with the school’s leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Akrotiri Primary 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 124 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 337 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	64	43	35	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	73	59	47	38	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	70	56	48	39	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	44	56	45	7	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	49	55	44	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	61	49	54	44	3	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	52	56	45	2	2	0	0
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)	45	36	61	49	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	55	44	60	48	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	36	69	56	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	38	63	51	5	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	60	48	54	44	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	77	62	40	32	2	2	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



3 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Akrotiri Primary School, BFPO 57, Cyprus

Thank you so much for your warm welcome when we inspected your school. It was a pleasure to meet such polite and well behaved pupils- you are a credit to your school and to your families. We listened carefully to what you had to say. We have judged that Akrotiri Primary School is a good school.

You told us that you feel safe in school and that you settle quickly when you join the school. We think that staff look after you exceptionally well and make sure you have support when you need it. You said that you think you are doing well at school and we agree. Some of you talked about the many interesting things you do that teach you so much. You develop into mature, sensible young people and we think you could be given more responsibilities in school including helping to make decisions about school life. We also think you need more opportunities to learn about other communities beyond the one you share in Akrotiri.

Some of the things that teachers do in lessons are helping to make you better learners. Things such as 'working walls', assertive mentoring and target setting help you to understand what you are learning. Assessing for yourselves whether you have met the learning objective at the end of lessons helps too. Your positive attitudes to learning and your willingness to work hard are important factors in your good progress. Well done! Keep it up! We have asked that some teachers use these features more to make sure you get the best out of your learning. We were pleased to see how much provision has changed for Foundation Stage 1 and Foundation Stage 2 children since the last inspection. They now make good progress too.

All of these improvements since the last inspection are the result of the headteacher, other staff, and governors working hard to check what is good about the school and what needs to improve. We think that some staff need to develop their roles so that they can help Akrotiri School continue to improve in the future.

Best wishes

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector

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