

Afnorth International School

BFPO 28, Brunssum, Netherlands

Inspection dates 29–30 April 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The multi-national context of the school brings a special dimension to pupils' learning and experience. Pupils enjoy school and speak very positively about the interesting and varied opportunities they encounter.
- During their time in the school, pupils achieve well in English and mathematics because they are taught well.
- Pupils speak confidently and clearly, often using good vocabulary. Reading standards are good across the school.
- Pupils are very knowledgeable about the different ways they can keep safe, especially when using the internet.
- The headteacher makes sure that each pupil's progress is checked carefully and regularly. Extra support is put in place promptly, should pupils need it.
- Senior leaders are accurate in their judgements, when observing teaching. They identify appropriate development points to improve teaching even more.
- Members of the School Governance Committee have taken positive steps to find out about the school's work, and pupils' achievement, for themselves. They pose astute questions in their quest to provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More able pupils could be working at a swifter pace. More could be asked of them so that they achieve even better standards in writing and mathematics.
- The assistant headteacher and phase leaders are not experienced in reviewing and demonstrating how well their work makes a difference to pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's Inspector observed eight lessons, all of which were observed with either the headteacher or assistant headteacher. All lessons were taught by British section teachers apart from one: this was a short visit to Foundation Stage 1, taught by an American teacher. Meetings took place with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, leaders who have responsibility for phases, and three members of the School Governance Committee, including the Chair. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils. A telephone conversation took place with a representative of Service Children's Education.
- The school's data on pupils' progress and samples of pupils' work in writing and mathematics were scrutinised, together with a range of documentation.
- 32 parents completed the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Their responses were considered, along with 20 questionnaires completed by staff from the British section.

Inspection team

Margaret Dickinson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Afnorth International School is unique within Service Children's Education (SCE). It serves the military community of the Joint Force Command Headquarters at Brunssum, in the Netherlands, close to the German border. Currently, approximately 1100 multi-national pupils, aged between 3 and 18, attend the school. There are 74 pupils in the British section.
- Four nations sponsor the school: the United States of America, Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom. Each nation provides a national section headteacher who is a member of the international school's senior management team.
- Pupils and staff in the English speaking sections of the school are fully integrated. Pupils are taught in multi-national classes by American, Canadian and British teachers. The school has developed its own curriculum, which takes into account the expectations of these three nations.
- A Board of Governors, made up of senior defence representatives from each owning nation, is responsible for overall school policy and budget oversight. In addition, each section has a School Governance Committee (SGC) representing families from that community. Within the context of the international school's governance, the United Kingdom SGC is responsible for providing challenge and support for the work of the British section.
- In the British section, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported by school action is below average. The proportion supported by school action plus is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics, at Year 6 (M1).
- In common with all SCE schools, the proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at times other than the usual is high. Typically, pupils spend around two years at the school.
- During the inspection, Her Majesty's Inspector observed teaching and achievement in classrooms where pupils are taught by teachers from the British section. The progress of all pupils within the British section was evaluated, with a particular focus on those who have attended the school for a year or more.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress in writing and mathematics, especially for more able pupils, by:
 - making sure all teachers expect high standards from more able pupils, at all times, and do not readily accept a standard of writing that is below these pupils' capabilities
 - avoiding all occasions when more able pupils are given undemanding worksheets, in writing, or expected to do a long list of calculations which they find easy
 - letting all pupils know, specifically, what they need to concentrate on to make their writing better to reach the next level
 - routinely identifying and feeding back key errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling that pupils should know, by their age
 - making sure leaders examine the progress of different groups of pupils to guide them when judging how well pupils achieve in the school and to find out, precisely, where achievement should be even better.
- Provide coaching for the assistant headteacher and phase leaders to develop their expertise in reviewing and demonstrating their impact on teaching and pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils learn successfully during their time in the school and make good progress. Their attainment is checked regularly in the school's efforts to make sure all pupils have an opportunity to achieve well. Steps are taken to put in extra support where needed. Pupils with special educational needs therefore do well.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from a good variety of planned activities, inside and outside of the classroom, to encourage their broader development. Children are eager to learn and show interest in lessons. In FS1, children who have particular difficulties are well supported and adults pay good attention to communication skills by encouraging children to talk as they learn.
- Although numbers in each year are often small, analysis over several years shows attainment is mostly above average, especially so in reading. It is in writing where attainment is not as strong and the school should be aiming for more pupils to reach the higher levels by Year 2 (IY3) and Year 6 (M1).
- The work that has gone into developing phonics teaching in the school is providing pupils with solid early reading skills. Pupils in Year 1 (IY2) over the last two years have had good results in the national phonics check showing they have a good understanding of the sounds that different letter combinations make. This is giving them a good foundation for their future reading. Pupils express themselves clearly, often using good vocabulary and turns of phrase.
- In some classes, more able pupils are not reaching their potential as writers. They are capable of producing longer pieces of work than they typically write, and of a higher standard. Some of the older pupils are having to tackle too many worksheets that are undemanding and do little to enhance their skills as writers.
- In mathematics, more able pupils are expected to complete more work at the same level when the accuracy of what they have already produced shows they understand and could move on more promptly to more challenging work.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers establish a supportive atmosphere in their classrooms. They foster very good relationships with their pupils and create an ethos where pupils know any questions, ideas or comments will be welcomed and respected.
- Classrooms are stimulating and attractive, with plenty of displays and resources to support pupils' literacy and mathematics skills. They readily use the displays to remind them what they need to remember, or to help them answer the teachers' questions.
- Teachers use learning support assistants well as an extra, valuable resource. During the inspection, these adults were well prepared and well briefed by teachers. They often made a clear difference to pupils' learning.
- Workbooks show that pupils are given an interesting range of activities. They say they enjoy lessons at the school. Art and physical education lessons particularly shine out as favourites in the pupils' eyes. Social studies lessons are giving pupils a wider understanding of the context within which they learn, and live. Older pupils' knowledge of the host nation, the particular characteristics of the Limburg region and their awareness of how the three governments work, in the three English-speaking nations, is striking.
- There are good examples of quality marking but this is not entirely consistent across the school. Some of the mathematics marking higher up the school gives pupils very helpful advice, with the teacher setting out examples in pupils' books to show them where they have slipped up. This is not, however, consistent practice.
- In writing, most teachers note what has been done well and give pupils some pointers for improvement. However, technical aspects, such as spelling and punctuation errors, that should

be known, are not routinely picked up. Pupils are not given enough advice on, for example, two or three features they need to develop, generally, to move their writing to the next level.

- While workbooks show pupils make good progress, during the inspection some teaching fell short of good. In these cases, teachers did not scan the class enough to make sure that good learning was happening at all tables, often because they were intent on supporting individuals or small groups. They missed opportunities to re-focus pupils, intervene, remind or gather a small group together to give pupils' learning an extra boost.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes and enjoy school life. Their attendance is good.
- Pupils are a delight to talk to. Those that met with an inspector were unanimous in confirming the school is a very friendly place. One pupil summed this up, 'Within a couple of hours of getting here, I'd made five friends.'
- Pupils form good relationships and are responsible learners. When they are given a task to complete as a group, they cooperate well and are ready to compromise and negotiate if they come up with different ideas.
- Pupils leap to their work with enthusiasm, when initially given tasks, and their conversations are related to the task in hand. In several lessons, some pupils' attention began to wane when they were expected to carry on with the same task for a long time. They remained well behaved but their commitment to work hard in a sustained way was not as evident.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All parents who responded to Parent View confirmed that pupils feel safe and looked after well. Pupils who met with an inspector were also in no doubt that this is the case. They know that the site and building provide a very safe environment for them. They confirm that all adults are friendly and approachable should they need help. They have an astute awareness of all types of bullying but are adamant that it is extremely rare. They know the steps they should, and would, take were they to encounter difficulties if others acted in an unkind way.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher works closely and successfully with her American and Canadian senior colleagues, to provide a good education for the pupils within the British section. She rightly sees the multi-national context of the school as a special and rewarding dimension which can be of great benefit to both staff and pupils. All leaders work hard to overcome any potential challenges that the school's unique setting may pose.
- The school is a central and highly valued part of the Afnorth community. The headteacher's 'open door' policy means all parents, many of whom live some distance from the school, know they are welcome to visit should they wish to. Members of the SGC report that some parents opt to extend their tours in order to keep their children in the school. All who responded to Parent View reported they would recommend the school to another parent.
- A single plan for improvement covers all three nations' work. The headteacher has wisely negotiated with the Canadian and American principals to add writing as a priority area to the international school's plan for improvement. The writing section of the plan does not include specific measures to help the senior leaders and members of the SGC check that actions are improving achievement in writing.
- The headteacher and assistant headteacher keep a close eye on each pupil's progress. A lot of information is gathered on each pupil. However, this information is not used by senior leaders to full effect, to check patterns, strengths or weaknesses in the achievement of groups. It could be analysed more effectively to check that all groups of pupils make good progress and, importantly, to identify how achievement could be improved to outstanding.
- The headteacher has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and is quick to provide support

and coaching, when necessary, to lift any teaching that requires improvement. Other leaders are clear about their responsibilities and outline the various ways that they contribute to the school's work. They are less accomplished at analysing how their work makes a demonstrable difference to improving pupils' achievement.

- Pupils' personal and social skills are nurtured effectively and seen as an essential part of learning at Afnorth. The school provides a rich and interesting curriculum for pupils, enhanced by the opportunities that the multi-national context and the host nation provide. Pupils find there is a good range of clubs that they can attend and they enjoy the trips that are organised for them.
- The inspector-advisor from SCE visits on a regular basis to review the effectiveness of the British section. These visits provide appropriate challenge for senior leaders in reviewing their judgements. Not enough evidence was presented by senior leaders to demonstrate pupils' good achievement. This is an area where SCE could provide further guidance and challenge.
- Staff know individual pupils well and work closely with families and other sources of support, when necessary, to support pupils' wellbeing. There is good attention to keeping pupils safe in school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the SGC are clear of their role in offering support and challenge for the headteacher. They have taken appropriate steps to visit the school, sensibly with a particular focus in mind, to find out for themselves how the school operates. One member has conducted a tour of the school to look at reading, for example, and another has done the same for mathematics. A member has met with leaders to discuss the school's plans for improvement and how data on pupils' achievement is organised. The Chair and members of the SGC are asking astute and appropriate questions. They bring a valuable range of skills and expertise to their governance role and are well placed to support the school's leadership in improving the school even further.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 132412 |
| Local authority | Service Children's Education |
| Inspection number | 443696 |

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

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| 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 | 74 |
| Appropriate authority | Ministry of Defence |
| Chair | Col Kris Chafer |
| Headteacher | Ms Sheena MacLeod |
| Date of previous school inspection | 9 February 2011 |
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