

Afnorth International School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	132412
Local authority	Service Children's Education (SCE)
Inspection number	317340
Inspection dates	11 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Steve Isherwood 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
Number on roll	104

Appropriate authority	SCE
Chair	Major G Hailstone
Headteacher	Miss S MacLeod
Date of previous school inspection	November 2004
School address	JFC HQ Brunssum BFPO 28 Brunssum
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Age group	3 to 11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Afnorth International School provides education for 1100 pupils with ages 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. A group of senior representatives from schools of each country governs the school and each nation provides a national section headteacher. In the British section, there are 104 pupils aged between three and eleven who are taught in multi-national classes by American, Canadian and British teachers. In common with all SCE schools, Afnorth is subject to the frequent transfer of pupils into and out of the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Our daughter loves attending. She is thriving and her passion for learning amazes us. We will be very sad when she has to leave'. This sentiment, expressed by one parent and echoed overwhelmingly by others is the essence of what makes Afnorth a good school. It has the potential to be even better. Pupils' achievements are good. They reach above average standards in their work and make good progress in their personal development. They feel safe and secure and are happy and enthusiastic learners. They have a good awareness of keeping fit and eating healthily. This is because of good provision and high standards of care and support for each individual. Relationships are second to none. As a result, pupils behave well, have positive attitudes to learning and show tolerance and respect for one another. Older pupils take good care of younger ones and, through the school council, they make a positive difference to school life. The school is well thought of in the community and there are good partnerships with other professionals and agencies.

Children make good progress from the moment they enter the school. This is because of good teaching in the Foundation Stage where activities are well planned to capture the interest and enthusiasm of all learners. By the time they leave in Year 6, standards are above average in all core subjects at the expected Level 4. Nevertheless, standards for some of the higher attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics and science are not yet high enough. This is because the level of challenge in some lessons is variable so that some pupils do not always achieve as well or as rapidly as they should. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified early and they receive good support in lessons.

A significant factor in pupils' good achievement is that teaching is good overall with some outstanding practice, particularly in literacy. Furthermore, the curriculum is well planned with a much stronger emphasis on the development of key skills in reading and writing. However, there are pockets of inconsistency in teaching, which are preventing some of the more able pupils from pushing on faster with their work, particularly in Key Stage 2. In the best lessons, new learning builds well on pupils' prior knowledge. Tasks are well chosen and skilful questioning by teachers keeps pupils on their toes. Where teaching is less strong, teachers are uncertain about what pupils need to learn next which means that planned activities are not sufficiently challenging or particularly well chosen. As a result, the pace of learning slows; pupils are not engaged in some of the activities and lose interest in their work.

The effective leadership of the headteacher and the drive and commitment of senior leaders to improve, underpin the success of the school. The school is not complacent and there is clear agreement on where further improvement is still required. For example, senior leaders are well aware that higher attaining pupils could do better in mathematics and science and have identified why this is the case. In addition, they are also aware that learning could be enhanced with greater consistency in the quality of lessons in Key Stage 2.

The school had made good progress since the last inspection and, as a consequence, and along with its other strengths has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and helps children make good progress across all areas of learning, but particularly in their personal and social development. They are very well cared for and their health and safety are of paramount importance to staff. When children enter the Nursery at three, their skills and understanding vary considerably but overall are those expected for their age. Within a short time, they settle quickly into a well-structured learning environment, show positive attitudes to their learning and behave well. Supportive relationships give them the confidence to initiate activities themselves. For example, at the beginning of every day children arrive keen to play: they select an activity of their choice and quickly become engaged in experimenting and learning. Staff are skilled at extending the children's progress through timely interventions and effective questioning. Each child's progress is observed regularly which enables staff to accurately plan the next steps of learning and ensures that activities are well chosen to help children learn both inside and outdoors. Often, activities are linked to a theme such as 'teddy bears', 'senses' and 'the Chinese New Year'.

Parents are hugely supportive, are kept very well informed about their child's progress and feel welcomed into the classrooms at all times. The Foundation Stage is well led and teamwork is strong. The phase leader gives clear guidance and support to colleagues. This means that staff regularly review the impact of their work on children's progress in order to improve the provision further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and accelerate progress for more able pupils in mathematics and science.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 so that it is consistently good.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards fluctuate year-on-year because of the small numbers of pupils involved and the different make up of each year group. Nevertheless, the school's records, as well as the test results from 2007, show standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good.

When children start in the Nursery, many have skills which are typical for their age, although this is variable across each year group. The strong provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that they make good progress so that, by the end of the Reception year, most children reach and often exceed the expected levels for their age.

Pupils' current work and recent test results show that they continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, where provision is also good. In 2007, standards at the end of Year 2 in all core areas were above average at Level 2, the standard expected for their age and at the higher level, Level 3.

Work in lessons and in their books shows that pupils in Key Stage 2, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress as they move through the school to Year 6. However, the progress that some of the more able pupils make in mathematics and science, based on their prior attainment, is not yet rapid enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school has maintained its strength in this aspect. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and supports their learning well. Pupils say they enjoy school, feel safe and have great trust in their teachers. They are happy in their work, try their best and are keen to succeed. Parents' questionnaires overwhelmingly support this view. It is also evident in the pupils' good attendance and by their enthusiasm and confidence in lessons and in all that the school has to offer. Pupils have good attitudes to learning, behave well and are caring and considerate towards others. However, during some lessons a small number of pupils become less attentive and considerate, especially where teaching fails to capture their interest and enthusiasm.

Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep fit and healthy by eating healthy snacks and by taking regular exercise. They participate well in a range of sporting and physical activities. They know about the difference between right and wrong and, through the work of the student council, they develop a strong social conscience and awareness of their responsibilities towards each other and the adults in the school.

Pupils recognise the needs of others who are less fortunate through their regular charitable donations. They try to make the community a better place by working together, making decisions and by their high participation in community events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is consistently good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. However, it is inconsistent within Key Stage 2 where it ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Where teaching is most effective, activities are well chosen and build well on pupils' prior knowledge. The aims of the lesson are clear, work is challenging and teachers' good subject knowledge enhances the quality of explanations well. Expectations are high, the pace of learning is brisk and, as a result, pupils are engrossed in their work and make good progress.

The school has worked hard to improve the quality of questioning and pupils' ability to work collaboratively. Both elements were evident during lessons observed during the inspection, particularly in enrichment groups where pupils are developing good reasoning and problem solving skills. Where teaching is less effective, not enough attention is given to pupils' prior knowledge so that the level of challenge is pitched either too high or too low. Here, pupils quickly lose interest, become restless and as a result do not make sufficient progress. This is most noticeable in respect of some of the more able pupils in Key Stage 2, particularly when engaged in mathematical activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has worked tirelessly to establish a curriculum that meets the needs of all learners in this unique multi-national setting. This has required good negotiating skills on the part of the headteacher and her staff as well as an appreciation of the curriculum expectations of the other nations represented within the school community. As a consequence, the school has successfully created a broad and balanced curriculum that has at its heart the acquisition and development of key skills in literacy and numeracy. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Subjects such as science and physical education make a significant impact on pupils' awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in art, music and physical education. These lessons make a good contribution to helping pupils realise their personal goals while developing emerging talents. A good range of extra curricular activities enriches pupils' learning and enjoyment. In addition, a residential experience in Year 6 enhances their emotional and social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Child protection and safeguarding procedures meet current guidelines. Good links with external partners such as the speech and language service support pupils' learning well. Good use is made of specialist provision within the school to vulnerable pupils, particularly those with emotional and behavioural needs and for those who find learning difficult. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils know, like and trust their teachers, which is why they feel safe and secure and are growing into self-confident young people. This influences their learning well and is one of the main reasons why they make good progress in their work. Systems to monitor pupils' progress are in place and are used well to set targets for improvement over the year. However, the level of support for pupils, through an assessment of their understanding during lessons and the subsequent provision of appropriate work designed to take their learning forward varies from class to class. In some cases, the quality of marking is good because it not only recognises pupils' achievements but also contains comments that indicate how they can improve. This motivates and inspires pupils to do their best. However, this is not always the case. On occasions, particularly in Key Stage 2, work is not marked to the same high standard as in the rest of school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management lie at the heart of the school's work and have ensured that the high standards identified at the last inspection have been maintained. This is because of the strong and purposeful leadership of the headteacher and the effective support of senior staff and members of the School Governance Committee in their various areas of responsibility. As a group, they know the school well and are aware of where further work is still required. For instance, establishing a system of phase leaders has effectively ensured that there is a clearer view of the quality of teaching and learning because staff have been involved in analysing data, conducting lesson observations and scrutinising pupils' work. As a result, the school's improvement plan is underpinned by a clear commitment to raising achievement and contains a good range of relevant priorities with appropriate actions, which are well understood by staff.

The School Governance Committee offer satisfactory support to the school. Its members are very committed, and are increasingly confident in asking the right questions to take the school forward.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No



13 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Afnorth International School, Brunssum, BFPO 28.

As you know, Mr Keeler and I visited your school recently to find out about how well you are learning. We enjoyed our day with you and thank you for being so polite and friendly. We really enjoyed chatting to you around the school, in your classrooms and in the group interview. As promised, I am writing to let you know what we found out.

Firstly and most importantly, we would like you to know that you go to a good school. We are delighted that you work hard and behave well. You told us that you enjoy your work and that many of your lessons are interesting and often fun. We agree. We could see this with our own eyes when some of you were discussing what makes a poem funny and when those of you in the Reception class were finding words beginning with different letters. We can also see how all the adults in the school look after you well and your parents told us this too.

We are pleased to see that you are taught well, feel safe and make good progress in your work. Miss MacLeod and all the staff work very hard to make the school as good as it can be and we are sure that it will continue to improve. To help with this, we have asked them to ensure that more of you reach the higher levels in your work. We want more of your lessons in Key Stage 2 to be like the very best ones we saw when you were very enthusiastic about your learning.

You can all help your school to improve by telling your teachers what makes lessons interesting and what helps you to learn.

Thank you once again. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools