



Defence Children Services (DCS)

Building 183
Trenchard Lines
Upavon Station
Pewsey
Wiltshire
SN9 6BE

Tel: 01980 618710

Email: RC-DCS-HQ-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk

6 January 2025

Review of School Effectiveness Report (ROSE) Report – AFNORTH School

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

Context and character of the school

The British Section, AFNORTH International School, provides education in the Netherlands for children aged 3 - 11 years. There are four national sections which comprise the school; United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Germany and all operate in the same building with shared facilities. Although not a British school as such, it delivers a British education within a microcosm of 22 NATO nationalities. Where space is available, the UK are encouraged to provide education on a fee-paying basis for other NATO nations. This means that the children of the allies can be educated together, often resulting in very high numbers of pupils with EAL. Class sizes are typically small, enabling staff to provide more focus and feedback to individuals.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the UK national average. Stability is low, meaning there is high mobility of learners. Many pupils leave or join the school in-year, because of 'trickle postings' to Joint Forces Command, Brunssum.

The school's mission statement, 'Inspiring respect, resilience and the ability to think and act inclusively in our international environment' is understood by all and embedded. Ambitious leaders seek to create aspirational thinkers, reflective learners and responsible citizens.

What is it like to attend this school?

AFNORTH School is warm and vibrant. Pupils and parents confirm it is a privilege to attend. The international nature of the school permeates every aspect of life and learning. The united colours of Europe reflect the diverse and welcoming community. Pupils say that school is family to them, albeit an extended one. Learners feel cherished as they belong to something special and unique to them.

Pupils love learning new and exciting things alongside their friends, including new languages and vocabulary to help them. They develop a wider perspective and see themselves as global citizens. Staff set high expectations of what they will achieve and the skills they will need now and for the next stages of learning. As a result, pupils leave with

the skills, independence and confidence to tackle more complex learning to come. They receive a strong start to their education.

Pupils behave well. They take responsibility for their choices and learn how to understand their emotions. They also recognise feelings in others, developing empathy and patience. This means that cooperation and collaboration is strengthened, so that they can learn more together. Pupils are safe and secure. They learn how to keep themselves safe both online and offline. They develop the vigilance to stay safe and act appropriately when required.

Learning is irresistible. Most children join the school not knowing anyone, not knowing the language or what to expect. However, this initial trepidation dissipates when they settle and engage in well-conceived tasks. Learning is also enjoyable because staff carefully craft lessons. This helps nurture their innate character traits, such as curiosity. As a result, pupils thrive in this treasured school.

Leadership at all levels – what went well

Senior leaders are highly ambitious for the school and lead by example. All staff align with their vision, adding consistency to the school's direction. The school is a happy place for staff to work and for eager pupils to learn. There exists an atmosphere of positivity and nurture that benefits the whole school community. The Head Teacher and Assistant Head Teacher work exceptionally well to lead and manage the school together. This includes supporting and challenging all staff to establish what effective practice looks like before it can be disseminated. As a result, staff value the training and encouragement they receive within a 'culture of learning' for all.

The principle of high expectation is evident across leaders at all levels. For instance, senior leaders welcome external scrutiny, alongside the school's own monitoring and evaluation processes. This sharpens senior leaders' thinking. This also contributes to a relentless pursuit of best practice in consistent teaching across the school. External scrutiny also validates what leaders already know and value. This shows leaders 'practising what they preach.'

Leaders are clear about how to deliver high-quality provision whilst meeting the differing needs within classes. Senior leaders provide strong support is in place for teachers to meet together to discuss data, undertake learning walks and support with staff development. This generates a real sense of a team working together.

Middle leaders have autonomy and responsibility for their subject. They are knowledgeable, gaining in confidence and ambition. Their work has improved learners' knowledge and skills progression across the curriculum. It has also helped them become more effective and decisive leaders. They continue to focus on consistency of teaching and children's outcomes, through more focused monitoring and evaluation. This helps them be secure on exactly what is being delivered, where gaps in learning have been identified and how well learners actually achieve.

Effective professional development ensures staff have the skills to support a variety of needs and have the relevant subject knowledge. Staff take responsibility for their own development, ably supported by senior leaders, and share pedagogical practice from a variety of sources. This helps them to inspire their colleagues and be able to teach the curriculum even more effectively.

Senior leaders know their learners and their provision extremely well. They are able to adapt practice to meet the needs of a highly mobile population with a large variety of needs and aptitudes. For example, they prioritise care and friendship, so pupils feel they belong quickly. Some pupils arrive with little or missing supporting-information about their learning or needs to aid transition. However, senior leaders focus on what they can do to help. As a result, learners and their families are fully supported from the first point of contact through to eventual departure. Staff quickly assess what learners know and where they may have gaps in their essential knowledge. This helps them design pathways to access the learning or provide catch-up opportunities when needed.

SEND is a real strength of the school. The special needs coordinator (SENCo) has experience, expertise and empathy. He quickly helps to identify, assess and ensure teachers meet the needs of pupils with SEND. He confirms staff are suitably ambitious about the learning for all pupils with SEND. This means he helps colleagues understand individual's starting points, existing strengths and their future aspirations. Careful diplomacy are a hallmark of how the school works collaboratively with parents and professionals alike.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Leaders create a rich strategy to enrich learning experiences and impact even further on the varied curriculum. Activities that exploit the local environment and develop culture are very well considered. Collaborative activities across the international school are effective strategies in extending friendships and learning opportunities. This builds friendships and learning about culture promoting deeper understanding and respect. Caring and creative approaches encourage optimism and tolerance. It helps pupils work together positively with all their peers and neighbours.

Parents have access to ongoing support through skilled staff with clearly defined roles. They are extremely supportive of what the school seeks to offer and achieve. Parents appreciate clear communications and the high expectations. They also appreciate that care is considered as equally important as the quality of education. Parents are extremely proud of the school and their ongoing involvement in their children's education. Parental engagement is a real strength of leadership at AFNORTH.

Personal development is another strength of the school. Pupils become confident, capable communicators despite often arriving with limited English language. They quickly establish themselves, make friendships and acquire the cultural capital they need to succeed. Leaders provide a wealth of rich opportunities and experiences to exploit individual's talents and interest. These pursuits change over time and the school adapts accordingly.

Senior leaders correctly identify what the school does well and are tackling areas identified for development. They also understand the next steps to bring about the improvements. During the review, there were no surprises. Senior leaders prioritise the few, right areas for improvement at a time. They ensure these are embedded before moving on. The school improvement plan is created collegially as everyone is consulted and contributes to the evaluation process.

Governors are well informed and will challenge leaders, when required to do so. However, as a relatively new group they more regularly fulfil the role of 'critical friend' to support senior leaders' capabilities. They remain highly committed and professionally curious. This helps them learn their responsibilities quickly and begin to challenge senior leaders.

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

- Continue to develop consistency of teaching and learning across the school.

Why? Leaders have already identified that they need to improve the consistency of teaching and learning. Senior leaders know there have been numerous initiatives and changes to the curriculum in recent years. Embedding the provision and practice is essential. For instance, helping pupils acquire and retrieve knowledge and skills, use essential vocabulary and building on prior learning in all classes, all of the time.

- Curriculum improvement continues so all subjects align with strongest

Why? Not all subject curriculums are as well developed as the strongest areas: English and Mathematics. In some foundation subjects, leaders have not yet precisely identified and fully sequenced the detailed knowledge that they want pupils to learn within the curriculum. This means that pupils are not always confident in recalling and using key knowledge and skills. Leaders should continue to monitor the full implementation of the curriculum to ensure that all pupils acquire what they need in readiness for the next stage of their education.

Quality of Provision and outcomes – what went well...

Relationships are warm and genuine. Staff model tolerance and patience, which are at the heart of inclusive interactions. Relationships are highly positive and professional, built on mutual respect. Pupils are extremely proud of their welcoming school. They fully embrace the lessons they receive and the wide range of opportunities available.

Pupils are at the centre of everything the school does. The quality of provision is strengthening, enabling pupils to successfully navigate the primary phase of their education. This ensures they are truly ready for their next phase in education, in whichever country this may be.

The curriculum offer is regularly reviewed, and changes have been made based on analysis of pupil needs and leaders' ambition to provide even higher quality. Examples include adapting a new science scheme of work and introducing 'Zones of Regulation' to help all children understand their feelings and develop a common language to express themselves.

Subject leaders' support, alongside the senior leaders focus on high-quality teaching and learning, has led to more effective practice. Staff use their in-house professional development to improve the delivery of the curriculum, for example through questioning and promoting metacognitive practice.

In the core curriculum, and increasingly in the wider curriculum, links between prior learning and current learning are made. Pupils can recall things they have learned before, because learning is enriched by contextual, experiential activities. The Assistant Headteacher leads a combined international trip for all Year 6 pupils to Arnhem. This includes pupils from each section deepening understanding and collaborating on understanding sensitive events, albeit from the past.

Teachers carefully sequence learning within lessons, especially in core subjects. This is possible because staff work hard together to maximise their subject knowledge and ensure

curriculum rigour. Adults use their skills to ask challenging questions that deepen and check pupils' understanding. It also allows for misconceptions to be corrected. Appropriate scaffolding of tasks and modelling of learning are used so that pupils can see and hear how their work and communication skills can improve further.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Reading is at the heart of all activities. Pupils love reading and talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and value class reading texts. Pupils especially appreciate discussing interesting and challenging texts with their Head Teacher, over hot chocolate as part of the Book Club.

Staff and senior leaders have worked hard to enhance the learning environments and cater for all needs. This has enabled those with additional needs and the most able to access all parts of the curriculum equitably. Leaders continually reflect and refine the level of challenge for the most able learners. They are vigilant that there is no opting out and that everyone must think deeply, so they can contribute equitably.

Learning support assistants are deployed purposefully to benefit individuals. Support staff confirm there is a strong collaboration and communication. Principled leaders prioritise staff workload and well-being without compromising on quality or ambition.

Pupils achieve very well, sometimes exceptionally. Indeed, speaking with children about their learning and the high-quality work in their books is stronger than published outcomes for Key Stage 2. Attainment has remained stable for several years, in line with UK national averages. However, as most pupils only stay for up to two to three years and over half of them complete tests in their second or third language, this is significant.

As a result of staff's dedicated teamwork, pupil outcomes are improving for Year 1 phonics. The newly introduced systematic synthetic phonics programme is taught with fidelity and implemented consistently. Published outcomes improved on the previous year and is well above the UK national average. Leaders embrace opportunities to improve the offer for all learners.

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

- Nothing identified

Safeguarding

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are effective. There is an open and positive culture, supported and challenged by Governors. Pupil's safety and welfare are paramount to everyone. For example, concerns regarding the safety of bus journeys for some pupils confirm vigilance and collaboration with other sections. Views and experiences of parents and staff are actively sought to help keep all children safe, including whilst online.

Gareth Flemington

Governance and Performance Lead

School	AFNORTH International School (British Section)
Unique Reference Number	132412
Head Teacher	Sheena Macleod
Review dates	20 to 21 November 2024
Location	Brunssum, Netherlands
Local Authority	Defence Children Services
Type	Primary
Age Range	3 to11
Number of pupils on the school roll	121
Chair of School Governance Committee	Lt Col Robert Hobbs
Website	https://afnorth-is.com/
Date of previous Ofsted inspection	6 June 2017

Information about the school

- The British section is one of 4 national sections operating on one shared campus. The campus and facilities are shared by other nations serving Joint Forces Command, Brunssum where ‘trickle postings’ result in very high levels of mobility (approximately 80%).
- The British Section numbers on roll are well below an average sized UK primary school.
- Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) are significantly above the national average. This equates to approximately six out of every ten pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are below the national average. This equates to approximately one pupil in ten.

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 and spoke directly with parents.

Review Team

Gareth Flemington (Lead Reviewer)	Governance and Performance Lead, UK
Peter Brown	Assistant Head Teacher, AFNORTH School
Natalie Johnston	Head Teacher, Episkopi Primary, Cyprus
Donna Simpson	Assistant Head(Cyprus), DCS