



## **Defence Children Services (DCS)**

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### **Review of School Effectiveness (ROSE) Report – Akrotiri Primary School**

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

#### **Context and character**

Akrotiri is a much larger than average sized primary school. It is situated within RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus. The school has very high pupil mobility, reflecting the constant 'trickle postings' of Service personnel. This means the vast majority only staying between two to three years. Indeed, very few learners remain at the school for the entirety of their primary education. The vast majority of children come from military families, although very small number of civilians and fee payers account for the remainder.

The majority of learners are of White British heritage. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are below the national average. Proportions of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) are well below the national average. The school's vision, 'Roots to grow and wings to fly' is embedded and embraced by everyone. The school fosters a deep sense of belonging, despite the turnover challenges. The values represent the heartbeat of the school. Leaders model everything they expect from others to live out, 'honesty, empathy, aspiration, respect and teamwork.'

#### **What's it like to attend this school?**

Pupils love their school and feel cherished. They appreciate the extensive opportunities available and benefit from them. Staff prioritise pupils' transition into the school, helping them to settle and to make friends quickly. Pupils appreciate the efforts from staff to include them in school life even before arriving. They like how the whole school instantly makes them feel welcomed and celebrates their achievements throughout their time. This inspires pupils to work hard in lessons and try their best. When pupils do leave, they are ready and eager for the next stages of learning.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are a real strength. Pupils feel exceptionally well supported from staff and their peers. Pupils respond well to the numerous trained peer mentors. They assist pupils in helping themselves or in seeking wider support from a dedicated team of staff. Children play cooperatively in the large outdoor space with plenty of activities to choose from.

The school plans purposeful learning experiences, beyond the academic to complement and enrich the curriculum. Pupils especially look forward to the residential opportunities from Year 1 onwards as it helps develop their resilience and teamwork. Leaders enable pupils to learn about respect and responsibility, for example by being house captains or eco monitors. This allows them to serve others, develop diplomacy and enhance their leadership skills. Pupils are happy and taught how to keep themselves safe. Excellent relationships are nurtured to build trust and openness.

### **Quality of leadership at all levels – what’s working well...**

Senior leaders know the school’s strengths and areas for development. They work extremely well together. This has enabled senior leaders to create a positive climate for colleagues to flourish. They prioritise the right things in the right way for the most impact. Their honesty and integrity in creating a stronger team is a credit to them. Senior leaders also coach, mentor and help others frame their approaches or sharpen their evaluations. This helps middle leaders in holding their colleagues to account more effectively, without hostility. This has improved consistency of provision, practice and professionalism.

Individual staff work together well to make sure children receive the highest possible quality of education. Staff prioritise their professional development and personal improvement. For example, they work closely with secondary colleagues as part of a successful island-wide initiative, called the Professional Learning Community (PLC). This has led to meaningful work to strengthen geography fieldwork and subject leadership networks. Effective work within the school on ‘explorations of learning’ have embedded a coaching model - rooted in the teacher’s standards. This is embraced by staff to articulate strengths, next steps and consider the impact of their teaching. It also provides invaluable evidence as part of performance management arrangements.

Leaders understand the importance of transitions into the school and for re-entry into the next school. This also includes from the local feeder Early Years Setting. Mitigating the impact of mobility and supporting family deployment is a real strength of this school. The strategy is clear and cohesive in supporting Service children. For instance, the ‘Arrivals and Departures’ board creates anticipation and sense of belonging, even before learners join. The Learning Mentor and her colleagues ensure that when pupils’ transition to their next schools they leave with more useful information, such as learning strengths or adaptations for support. This especially helps the most vulnerable learners. The moral imperative to advantage learners, so not as to disadvantage them, is compelling.

The school is ambitious for pupils with SEND. Over time, it has improved its own systems to identify individual pupils’ needs. Leaders have a clear rationale and understanding that SEND is not a ‘bolt on’ and is everyone’s responsibility. As a result, staff provide pupils with the bespoke help they need to experience success. A very small minority present with challenging behaviour, which staff manage extremely well. They ensure disruption to learning is minimal and that pupils refocus quickly and attend to their learning.

Senior leaders invest heavily in their middle leaders. This helps them teach at a consistently high standard. It also means that middle leaders are empowered and encouraged. They make key decisions about how their subject or area of expertise operates and develops. This has led to stronger staff engagement. Middle leaders have a clear mandate to hold their colleagues to account, boosting the consistency and quality of practice. Leaders at all levels work well as a team, supporting and challenging each other

to improve their teaching further. Their work to monitor and evaluate is paying dividends. Middle leaders confirm that principled senior leaders value their work. Senior leaders think deeply, focusing on optimising staff workload and well-being, to benefit everyone.

Learners gain from well-considered and delivered opportunities to support pupils' personal development. Pupils think carefully about difference and commonalities. They know that not everyone will agree with them and that it is acceptable to be yourself, as long as you respect others and take responsibility for yourself. Coordinated work to support diverse pastoral needs, enrichment to build cultural capital and nurture inclusivity is effective. This is because it helps pupils develop their sense of community and citizenship. Pastoral support, delivered via the Flamingo Room, helps meet a wide range of needs. This helps learners to have their needs met so they can re-engage with learning. Strong work from the Learning Mentor provides a vital interface for parents to be informed and reassured during all transition processes.

### **Quality of leadership at all levels - Even better ifs...**

- Leaders design and implement a programme to develop strength of character further.

Why? Leaders already know there is more to do as part of their wider development work. They should decide exactly how the school develops pupils' character, confidence, resilience and future aspirations. Although the HEART values are known, some elements are more embedded than others. Honesty, respect and team work are understood and exemplified. However, aspiration and empathy are not fully understood. Pupils are unsure of what they mean and how they help in their learning. The programme will enable staff to deliver what is 'taught', 'caught' and 'sought'. This will help leaders refine their curriculum offer and be held to account for teaching this vital aspect of personal development.

### **Quality of provision and outcomes**

Pupils learn the broad and balanced curriculum, achieving very well. This is also reflected in strong published outcomes. For instance, seven out of ten pupils in Year 6 meet the expected standard for reading, writing and mathematics. This is significantly better than the UK national average and helps them in being 'secondary ready', wherever this may be. Central to this is high ambition for all pupils, including for learners with SEND. This strong work starts in the early years and continues throughout. Regular retrieval practice and valuable formative assessment in lessons, helps pupils strengthen their long-term memory.

The promotion of oracy gives pupils the skills and confidence to articulate their ideas and explanations. Pupils appreciate that teachers make their lessons fun, engaging but also challenging. This means they have to work harder, think longer and use their new-found vocabulary to shape their work. Published outcomes for Reception Year is consistently and significantly above national average. Central to this is the strong work on the curiosity approach and developing younger children's executive function. When children can focus their attention and strengthen working memory, without being overloaded, it prepares well for more complex learning in Year 1. Similarly, outcomes for Year 1 phonics screening and Key Stage 1 standards are consistently and significantly above national averages.

The leadership of reading and phonics is strong. This is because both aspects are prioritised and prized. Over time the school has strengthened its approach to early reading. Effective work in the early years on communication and language from when

children join the nursery, pays off. This prepares them, and their parents, for starting the rigorous phonics programme. This is delivered with real precision and fidelity to the scheme. Staff teach phonics extremely well. They assess forensically to identify gaps and knowledge so that children can catch-up quickly, through effective support. They carefully match the books to sounds children know and need to practice. Pupils love the stories and high-quality texts their teachers use. This helps inspire and develop both wider vocabulary along with deeper comprehension. As a result, the school has created a culture of reading for pleasure. Pupils can read at an age-appropriate level and continue 'learning to fly' as they access the wider curriculum opportunities and beyond. Staff foster a love of reading so that learners can talk about their favourite books with enthusiasm and understanding.

Teachers are well trained and knowledgeable. They recognise the school's shift in focusing more on curriculum development and pedagogical content. Staff genuinely appreciate the support they receive from senior leaders and feel their practice and confidence has benefitted. They are entrusted and authorised to inspire their colleagues with the most up-to-date research and approaches. As a result, the teaching and subject knowledge of staff build and improve over time.

Written work produced by pupils is of consistent high-quality. It enables them to achieve the aims and ambitions of the well-sequenced curriculum. Middle leaders ensure their work builds on prior learning in cohesive ways. This enables pupils to practice and apply new knowledge and skills within existing structures. Work both in the classroom, such as working walls and as part of displays in corridors, contributes to strengthening learning.

Strong communication from the school is a hallmark. It is designed to engage, inform and celebrate achievements. Parents appreciate the use of social media and value the Head Teacher's weekly missive, 'Friday Feeling'. Pupils are confident and capable communicators. They articulate with conviction and pride their learning and development as individuals. Teachers concentrate on their own communication to be clear on what is being taught. Staff develop learners' language skills through singing songs, sharing high-quality texts and modelling everything they expect. Staff listen to children carefully and promote appropriate discussions about the subject matter being taught.

Expectations for every learner, regardless of starting points or any barriers to learning are high. Staff want the best for learners and expect them to rise to the elevated expectations for behaviour and achievement. Consistently high levels of engagement are evident across the school. Learners portray very positive attitudes to their learning, motivated by ambitious teachers.

### **Quality of provision and outcomes – even better ifs...**

- Use assessment well and consistently in non-core subjects.

Why? Assessment in core subjects is strong. Leaders already know that non-core subjects are a known next step, as set out in existing improvement plans. Assessment in some of these subjects is not used consistently well. As a result, leaders and teachers do not consistently know how secure pupils' learning is or what they can remember. Leaders need to establish a clear approach to checking and closing the gaps in learning, so that pupils know and remember more across the full curriculum. Stronger assessment will inform future teaching of what has been learned securely, before moving the learning on.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Indeed, there is evidence of exceptional practice. Firstly, the open and positive culture permeates from the top. It goes further to raise understanding via the School Governance Committee (SGC). The succession planning, attention to detail and upskilling through bespoke training is outstanding. This reduces single points of failure and builds in redundancy in case of unexpected changes in personnel. Through the curriculum work, pupils are protected from harm and taught how to keep themselves safe, both online and offline. Vigilant leaders know their contextual issues, such as alcohol and domestic abuse, and keep these at the forefront of people's minds. This includes helping staff to keep themselves safe and working with families to raise and resolve issues outside of school hours. Child protection arrangements are deeply embedded and kept under constant review.

Gareth Flemington (Lead Reviewer)

Governance and Performance Lead

School	Akrotiri Primary School
Head Teacher	Ben Turner
Review dates	1 and 2 December 2024
Location	Akrotiri BFPO 57, Western Sovereign Base Area (Cyprus)
Appropriate Authority	Defence Children Services
Type	Primary
Age Range	3 to 11
Number of pupils on the school roll	409
Chair of School Governance Committee	Station Commander, Group Captain Simon Cloke
Website	<a href="https://www.akrotiri.school/">https://www.akrotiri.school/</a>
Date of previous Ofsted inspection	21- 13 March 2017

### **Information about the school**

- The Head Teacher took up post in 2019.
- Akrotiri is a large primary school, well above the national average in pupil numbers. It serves the children of the British Forces and civilian families based at RAF Akrotiri Station.
- Nursery children in Foundation Stage 1 attend the feeder Early Years Setting. Foundation Stage 2, which caters for children aged 3 to 4, are on site.
- In common with other Ministry of Defence schools, the number of pupils who join or leave other than at normal times is very high, due to 'trickle postings.' In contrast, staffing has remained stable for several years.
- Turnover of pupils is typically at 85%, with pupils staying between 2 to 3 years.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are below the national average, which equates to one in eight pupils. Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) are well below average.

### **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. They also spoke directly with parents and a representative from the School Governance Committee.

### **Review Team**

Gareth Flemington (Lead Reviewer)	Governance and Performance Lead, UK
Hannah Robinson	Deputy Head Teacher, Akrotiri Primary
Caroline Neal	Head Teacher, Hornbill School, Brunei
Andy Yeoman	Assistant Head (Education-Standards-Professional Development)