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Ms S Macleod
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Macleod

Short inspection of Afnorth International School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are highly ambitious for your school community. The tireless work of you and your vice-principal ensures that pupils' development is promoted effectively in a stunning learning environment. Your school is therefore a hub of vibrant activities. Pupils are very positive about the support and help they receive from teachers and other adults. Pride in their work and efforts is evident across the school. Positive relationships between adults and pupils are typical and attitudes to learning, on everyone's part, are strong. Your thoughtful and dedicated leadership stimulates staff, pupils and most parents.

You, other senior leaders and members of the school governance advisory group have skilfully managed the substantial changes since the time of the last inspection. Pupils from the United Kingdom and Canada now attend classes in the 'BC' section and follow the English national curriculum. Pupils from the USA are now taught separately, apart from in the foundation stage and specialist subjects such as music and physical education. Your careful diplomacy and well-managed consultation ensured the smooth and seamless transition of these arrangements. Parents recognise the significant changes, although some expressed concerns regarding the challenges and complexities of the situation. However, most parents are supportive of your actions. As a result of the changes, you are monitoring staff more closely and holding them more firmly to account for the performance of pupils in their classes. Staff have responded very positively to the increased rigour. A cultural shift is evident in the school where staff actively seek professional feedback in order to improve their practice. Staff morale is high because all are aware of their

responsibilities and the part they play in the collective drive in securing improvement.

Your carefully revised curriculum is delivering academic rigour alongside the personal care to cater for pupils' individual needs well. It is also enabling pupils to work together successfully and develop the key academic skills and personal qualities to be successful in their future education and life. Pupils' personal successes and academic achievements are celebrated through the colourful and informative displays that also showcase the exciting and rich curriculum you offer. Pupils especially like the many trips and visitors that stimulate their interest, alongside the specialist teaching they receive in languages, art, music or physical education. Residential visits to Arnhem or studying crime and punishment in the medieval times bring learning to life for the varied and diverse groups of pupils who attend your school.

The new coach for mathematics has a strong command of the subject and of aspects that need further development in the school. Training and guidance for staff has improved teachers' subject knowledge of the national curriculum requirements and the 'mastery' approach. The curriculum for measure, shape and handling data is beginning to be more varied and interesting. Effective links are made to other subjects that promote pupils' enjoyment of the subject and their good progress in these areas of mathematics well. The same variety is not yet evident in the teaching of 'number'. Planned activities are at times too repetitive and do not routinely challenge pupils to use their knowledge of numbers to tackle new or different mathematical problems. The mathematics coach is aware of this issue and that the curriculum and teaching of number is not yet having the desired impact on developing pupils' fluency and deeper conceptual understanding.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a particular strength. You promote this well through your rich and varied curriculum, which is enhanced through a wide range of activities from Forest School experiences to Bike Safety delivered by the Dutch police. Carefully planned lessons in 'guidance' or personal, social and health education (PSHE) help pupils' understanding of different cultures, faiths and beliefs. Your approach to developing a caring environment and a secure community ensures that pupils learn together in a positive manner, interacting well with their peers from different countries. You use their own heritage and cultural experiences to promote pupils' deep cultural understanding well through host country culture days. As a result, pupils are very tolerant of one another and of individuals' personal needs.

You continue to successfully address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Teachers' expectations are raised due to your clear guidance and supportive training. Teachers routinely follow the agreed marking and feedback policy, therefore pupils know what to do to improve their work. Checking pupils' work with colleagues is proving successful in securing accurate judgements on the standards pupils are reaching. Phase leaders are playing a much stronger role in securing improvements across the school. You are aware that, with the raised expectations of the new national curriculum, ongoing work is needed to stretch the

most able pupils.

Overall, good-quality teaching, combined with an effective curriculum and strong leadership, has improved pupils' performance since the previous inspection. However, in 2016 pupils' standards at the end of Year 6 were below those anticipated. Data on pupils' progress in writing was markedly lower than expected and significantly below the national average. However, the misinterpretation of national assessment criteria, combined with limited time to adjust assessment information, due to the end of term being much earlier than for schools in England, meant that published data was not reflective of pupils' actual writing ability. Work in current pupils' books and the school's assessment information indicate that pupils' progress and standards are on track to return to their previously good levels.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Pupil's safety and welfare are of paramount importance to everyone, and this is shown by the way you have followed up concerns regarding the safety of bus journeys for some pupils. Appropriate checks are made when staff are recruited, and policies are up to date and applied consistently. The school site is safe and risk assessments are thorough. Staff and the school governance advisory group have attended training appropriate to their role. They are aware of what they should do to help keep children safe, including from risks associated with extremism and online bullying and grooming.

Your investment in supporting pupils' emotional development is becoming increasingly successful. Specific sessions for those pupils who may be vulnerable provide a supportive environment where any concerns can be resolved. The strong sense of belonging within the school community ensures that pupils feel safe. Parents agree. Teaching pupils about the values of respect, tolerance and open acceptance is one of the cornerstones of your work. Incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare. Pupils of all nationalities mix with one another, which helps to develop their social skills well.

Inspection findings

- Your school improvement plan rightly identifies closing the attainment gap between boys and girls as a key priority. You emphasise engaging boys in their learning through interesting, planned activities. Actions start in the early years, where a high degree of care is taken to plan activities that promote boys' use of spoken language. The outdoor environment is used effectively to provide a wealth of rich activities that support children's learning and development. Boys are enthused to use their knowledge of language to discuss then write reports, for example when working out how to rescue Floppy from the tree outside after the giant has stolen him and hidden him there. As a result of this precise approach, boys' communication, language and literacy progress is rapid, especially for those where English is not their native language.
- Your consistent approach to developing and using spoken language skills to aid

boys' progress in reading and writing is also consistently applied in older year groups. A clear process of improving pupils' writing is evident across the school. Effective links are made to other subjects, and displays show a good variety of extended writing. Your approach to teaching writing typically places the reader at the heart of activities. Pupils therefore develop a keen understanding of the impact of their choices and how literary devices create the impact they desire. Consequently, all pupils' progress in writing is rapid.

- You are working hard to continually stretch and challenge the most able pupils, but there is more work to do. For example, at times adults do not demonstrate sufficient depth of subject knowledge to fully extend older pupils when reading and studying texts. Therefore pupils' more complex inference and deduction skills are not being fully developed. Some good examples exist where effective questioning develops pupils' understanding of how Shakespeare's use of dialogue, in 'Macbeth', infers the mood or informs the reader who is speaking.
- Phase leaders are playing a greater part in continually improving standards in the school than previously. They regularly check on the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility and contribute to the overall school improvement plan well. The leadership of writing, for example, is characterised by enthusiasm, detail, passion and good knowledge of the subject. This, in turn, is reflected in teachers' and pupils' extremely positive attitudes toward language, literacy, reading and writing, and is having a positive impact on pupils' current rates of progress. Occasionally the monitoring conducted, to establish what is working well and what needs to be further improved, is too general. Therefore, precise actions are not always provided for teachers to improve specific aspects of their practice or pupils' learning.
- On our learning walk, we noted Year 1 pupils' accuracy in their knowledge of phonics. Teachers and other adults are technically precise with their delivery in helping pupils confidently segment and blend sounds, such as the split digraph 'e-e', to decode words. Such approaches have led to all pupils meeting the standards in the Year 1 phonics check this year. Those who did not meet the standard in previous years receive additional support and are catching up with their peers rapidly. Therefore, the firm foundations on which to build pupils' future success in reading are being secured.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching challenges the most able pupils so they can reach the standards they are capable of
- leaders' monitoring places a sharper focus on the pupils' progress and their gains in knowledge, skill or understanding to increase its quality and impact
- the curriculum for 'number' in mathematics is improved to develop pupils' deeper conceptual understanding, problem solving, reasoning and fluency.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the school governance and advisory group

and the Senior Principal for Children and Young People, MOD. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the leaders for English, mathematics, early years and for writing. All members of the school governance advisory group met me to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I met with a representative of the MOD. The views of a number of parents were gathered through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Visits to classrooms were conducted jointly with you to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, to review the quality of pupils' work over time, and to listen and talk informally with them about their experiences of school. A range of documentary evidence was evaluated, including documents relating to safeguarding and governance.