

Graham Reeves Ltd

for

The Isle of Man Department of Education, Sport and Culture

External Validation of the School Self-Review and Evaluation

Onchan Primary School

Introduction

Each school on the Isle of Man is expected to conduct a School Self-Review and Evaluation (SSRE) using an approach devised by the Department of Education, Sport and Culture (DESC) in consultation with the schools. Graham Reeves Ltd has been commissioned by the Department to carry out an external validation of each school's SSRE. The validation of the Onchan SSRE included a visit to the school on Friday 26th January 2018. The visit was made by Graham Reeves. He worked alongside Jo Richardson, headteacher, and Chrissy Callaghan, representing the DESC's Education Improvement Service. They were assisted, during part of the visit, by Anna Griffiths, deputy headteacher, and Michael Kinmond, assistant headteacher.

Context

Onchan Primary School is situated in Onchan, to the north of Douglas. It has a very large catchment area which includes lower Onchan, Onchan Headland towards Groudle, and part of Douglas Promenade. The catchment area has a fairly even split between local authority, privately rented and owner-occupied accommodation.

Parts of the school building are more than 150 years old. It has been extended on a number of occasions over the years.

There are 446 pupils on roll, including those in the special unit for children with significant learning and medical needs. 24% per cent of pupils, including those in the unit, have been identified as having special educational needs. This is above the Island average. 18.6% per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is around the Island average. Five per cent of the pupils are learning English as an additional language. There are no 'looked after' children.

Pupils are organised into 17 classes plus the unit. There are 19.9 full-time-equivalent teachers including the headteacher and the unit manager. There are four full-time and two part-time members of the classroom support staff, plus 5 supporting pupils with special education needs in mainstream classes and four in the unit. There has been a relatively high level of staff turnover in recent years.

Focus of the Validation

The validation of the SSRE covered the full range of the school's judgements but focused on three specific aspects. These were

- **Achievement against Prior Attainment**
- **Teaching for Learning**
- **Keeping Safe**

Achievement against Prior Attainment

The school judges this aspect as 'effective'. It was chosen for consideration in order to:

- Confirm that most pupils make expected progress (or better) over the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Confirm that a large majority of pupils make 3 or more sub levels of progress over KS1 in all of the core subjects that have been tracked whilst assessment records have been in place
- Confirm that a large majority of pupils make 6 or more sub-levels progress over KS2 in all of the core subjects that have been tracked whilst assessment records have been in place
- Confirm that most pupils love learning and acquire and apply skills, knowledge and understanding
- Consider the extent to which it is possible to make a judgement about progress in speaking and listening and science
- Confirm that Achievement against Prior Learning can be judged as 'effective' overall.

Teaching for Learning

The school judges this aspect as 'effective'. It was chosen for consideration in order to confirm that:

- Most teachers create and embed a growth mindset culture towards learning
- A large majority of teaching staff promote a culture of challenge, high aspirations and ambition
- Assessment systems are used to track individual progress and ensure that learning is challenging in the majority of classes so that children have accurate and challenging 'next steps' set to maximise further learning opportunities
- A range of creative teaching strategies are used in a large majority of classes, to improve the learning of pupils
- Teaching for Learning can be judged as 'effective' overall.

Keeping Safe

The school judges this aspect as 'very effective'. It was chosen for consideration in order to confirm that:

- All staff are aware of key policies and procedures for child protection and where they can be found, thus ensuring that all members of staff know what to do if a safeguarding issue arises
- Action is swiftly taken to eliminate and minimise hazards within and beyond the school
- The school is proactive in addressing pupils' concerns and keen to get pupils involved in making key decisions about their safety
- The school addresses the impact of safety in the curriculum in number of ways
- Keeping Safe can be judged as 'very effective' overall.

The Validation Activities

To check and confirm the judgements in the SSRE the validation team:

- toured the school

- observed lessons
- observed lunchtime
- looked at a number of documents
- talked with a group of teachers
- talked with a group of pupils
- talked with a group of parents

Findings

Summary

The school knows itself well. It is in a good position to plan for further improvement.

Achievement against Prior Learning

A large majority of pupils who completed the Foundation Stage in 2017 had made five or more jumps in all areas of the Early Learning Goals. This can be judged as ‘inspirational’.

A large majority of pupils who completed Key Stage 1 in 2017 had progressed by three or more sub-levels in reading, writing and mathematics over the course of the key stage. A large majority of those who completed Key Stage 2 had progressed by six or more sub-levels. The school does not have the necessary data to make a definitive judgement about pupils’ progress in speaking and listening or science through the whole of Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. Judging by the recorded progress in Year 2 and Year 6, the progress in other subjects, and the professional judgements of teachers and school leaders, it is likely that a large majority made expected progress or better. The school has addressed the issue of the missing information and has introduced robust systems for recording and analysing assessment data for all core subjects. This means that necessary evidence will be available in the future. Based on the evidence that is currently available, progress in key stages 1 and 2 can be judged ‘effective’.

A very large majority of pupils love learning and acquire and apply skills, knowledge and understanding.

The validation team concludes that, given the available hard evidence, the school is right to judge Achievement against Prior Attainment as ‘effective’ overall. The validation team also concludes that it is likely that – with a full range of evidence – a judgement of ‘very effective’ will be appropriate in the future.

Teaching for Learning

A very large majority of teachers create and embed a growth mindset culture towards learning. A large majority of promote a culture of challenge, high aspirations and ambition.

Teachers use assessment systems to track individual progress. They ensure that learning is challenging in the large majority of classes. They are developing the practice of identifying and communicating ‘next steps’ so that pupils know what they need to do to improve their learning.

Teachers in a large majority of classes use a range of creative teaching strategies to improve the learning of pupils.

The validation team concludes that the school is right to judge Teaching for Learning as 'effective'. It also notes that practice is improving and that there is a high level of consistency across the school. There was evidence during the validation visit of teaching that could be regarded as 'very effective' or even 'inspirational'. The improved practice and greater consistency is likely to lead to improved learning and a judgement of 'very effective' in the near future.

Keeping Safe

All staff are aware of key policies and procedures for child protection and where they can be found. They know what to do if a safeguarding issue arises. Action is swiftly taken to eliminate and minimise hazards within and beyond the school.

The school is proactive in addressing pupils' concerns involves them in making key decisions about their safety. Safety issues are addressed in various ways through the school curriculum.

The school meets statutory requirements concerning the production, review, distribution, and availability of key policies.

The validation team concurs with the school's judgement that Keeping Safe is 'very effective'.

Other Areas Considered

As well as the three specific aspects of the SSRE on which it focused, the validation team also considered other judgements set out in the SSRE. It concurred with many of these judgements, including:

- The majority of staff can talk about the school vision
- Teachers use a range of strategies to meet the needs of all learners
- Responsibilities are shared among staff and there is appropriate training and staff development
- Appropriate policies are in place and are reflected in day-to-day practices
- The Manx context and global issues are developed across the school
- The school is held in high regard
- Reading record books are being used well and encourage dialogue between teachers and parents
- Learning logs improve communications between home and school
- Links with other local schools ensure that transition is effective.

Conclusion

The school knows itself well and is therefore in a good position to plan for further improvement. The SSRE does not always reflect this knowledge or do the school justice. This is partly because some sections do not include sufficient evidence and examples, and partly because considerable improvements have been made since the beginning of the school year.

The school has used findings from the SSRE to identify priorities for the school improvement plan (SIP). The SIP needs to be more specific about the intended impact on pupils' learning.

Graham Reeves
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