

Graham Reeves Ltd

for

The Isle of Man Department of Education, Sport and Culture

External Validation of the School Self-Review and Evaluation

Michael 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 Michael School SSRE included a visit to the school on Tuesday 4 February 2020. The visit was made by Howard Marshall. He worked alongside Karen Riley, headteacher, and Caroline Savin, representing the DESC's Education Improvement Service.

Context

Michael Primary School is situated in the village of Kirk Michael. There are numerous private rentals in the village. There is no local authority housing. The school has 114 pupils on roll and five classes. There are six full-time equivalent teachers including the headteacher, together with one full time Senior Education Support Officer and one part-time Education Support Officer. Ten percent of the children currently receive free school meals. This is below the Island average. Fifteen percent have special education needs at 'school action', 'school action plus' or 'high level need'. This is below the Island average. No children are learning English as an additional language. The school is well resourced in terms of space for additional learning areas.

Focus of the Validation

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

Achievement against Prior Attainment Management Teaching for Learning

Achievement against Prior Attainment

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

- Achievement in the Foundation Stage is 'very effective'
- Achievement in Key Stage 1 is 'very effective'
- Achievement in Key Stage 2 is 'very effective'
- Within lessons and units of work, most pupils make progress and enjoy their learning.
- Achievement against Prior Attainment can be judged as 'very effective' overall

Management

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

- All key policies are in place and this is evident in the school's day to day effectiveness
- All staff use assessment systems effectively to track pupil progress through a range of assessments including individual and personalised target setting
- The appraisal system is supportive, thorough, cohesive and effective allowing staff the opportunity to improve practice
- Budget management is linked to the School Improvement Plan to ensure spending is in line with agreed improvement priorities
- Management can be judged as 'effective' overall

Teaching for Learning

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

- All teaching staff create and embed a growth mindset culture towards learning
- Pupils are often given opportunities to direct their own learning
- Reflection about learning is an embedded part of practice across the school
- All teachers have a good subject knowledge, and all are setting appropriate levels of challenge for their learners in order to ensure progress
- Teaching for Learning can be judged as 'very effective' overall

The Validation Activities

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

- toured the school, led by two pupils
- observed lessons in all classes
- visited the dining room at lunchtime
- observed playtime
- 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. With a few amendments to the SSRE it will demonstrate that it knows itself very well. It is in a good position to plan for continued improvement.

Achievement against Prior Attainment

A large majority of pupils (85.7%) who completed the Foundation Stage in 2019 had made five or more jumps in progress in thirteen of the seventeen areas of learning. This means that progress during this stage is 'very effective'.

A large majority of pupils who completed Key Stage 1 in 2019 had made progress of three or more sub levels in speaking and listening (75%), reading (100%), writing (100%), mathematics (100%) and science (93.8%). Many pupils made more than the expected progress over the Key Stage.

Achievement against Prior Attainment is therefore 'very effective' at the end of this Key Stage and is close to being 'inspirational'.

A large majority of pupils made six or more sub levels of progress over Key Stage 2 in all of the core subjects. In reading and science all pupils made at least the progress expected of them and in mathematics, speaking and listening and writing 85.7% made this progress. Many pupils made more than the expected progress over the Key Stage. Achievement against Prior Attainment is therefore 'very effective' and close to being 'inspirational' at the end of this Key Stage.

The school's monitoring shows that the large majority of pupils make very good progress. The SSRE included limited evidence of the pupils' love of learning. Our discussions with leaders, teachers and pupils plus evidence provided from surveys, indicates that pupils do have a 'love of learning'.

The validation team concurs with the school's judgment that Achievement against Prior Attainment is 'very effective' overall.

Management

The school has recently reviewed policy documentation and ensured that all policies are in place and are being used effectively and efficiently. The recent updating of the behaviour policy is an example of good practice involving pupils, parents and staff.

The school has an impressive assessment system which is well used by staff and leads to individual and personalised target setting. The validation team was shown evidence of effective assessment tracking which informs additional intervention and challenge for pupil learning.

The school has recently reviewed and changed its approach to appraisal. The new system is currently 'effective'; it is supportive, thorough, cohesive and effective in that it allows staff the opportunity to improve their practice. Once this new system is embedded it is likely to be 'very effective'.

The school's budget management is clearly linked to the priorities in its School Improvement Plan.

The validation team concurs with the school's judgment that Management is 'effective' overall.

Teaching for Learning

All teachers have a good understanding of subject knowledge and all are setting appropriate levels of challenge for their learners in order to ensure progress.

The school's evidence and the validation team's discussions with pupils confirm that staff create and embed a 'growth mindset' culture towards learning. Pupils explained their understanding of the learning journey and how being in the 'learning pit' was, at times, an important part of their learning.

The school encourages pupils to direct their own learning. Several examples were seen and discussed with pupils and teachers. These include pupils making decisions about the level of challenge in their learning, how they present their learning and make choices about their next unit from the International Primary Curriculum.

Reflection about learning is an embedded part of practice across the school. The vast majority of Key Stage 2 pupils confirmed that they are given time to reflect on their learning in a recent survey. Reflections on learning were seen in the 'planner' that is used as a communication tool with parents. This continues to be an area for development in the school.

Evidence from the school's monitoring and the validation team's observations indicate that all teachers have a good understanding of subjects and are setting appropriate challenges for pupils in order to ensure progress.

The validation team concurs with the school's judgment that Teaching for Learning is 'very effective' overall.

Other Areas Considered

In addition to the three specific aspects of the SSRE on which it focused, the validation team considered other judgments and statements set out in the SSRE. It concurred with many of these judgments, including:

- The vast majority of pupils and parents are committed to the Michael School community and are proud of it
- Pupils are able to discuss 'growth mindset' and how they use it to further their learning
- A large majority of pupils enjoy reading both in and out of school
- Attainment is 'effective' in the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2
- Leadership of the school is close to being judged as 'very effective'
- Good communication with parents is supported by the effective use of planners
- All staff use assessment systems to track pupil progress and set personalised individual targets
- There are clear links between learning information and the planning of school improvement priorities
- Feedback from pupils and staff indicates that the use of the International Primary Curriculum is both challenging and engaging
- The school is successful in promoting links with the local community – as one parent stated 'we are one big family'
- A very large majority of parents are happy with the amount of home learning opportunities provided by the school

Conclusion

The validation team concurred with the school's judgments in the three specific aspects of the SSRE on which it focused. It also concurred with the other judgments that it checked. It noted that the SSRE is in the main succinct, clear and related to the grade descriptors.

The school knows itself well and is in a good position to plan for the improvement. With a few amendments to the sections of the SSRE discussed at the validation visit the school will demonstrate that it knows itself very well.

Howard Marshall
February 2020