

Graham Reeves Ltd

for

The Isle of Man Department of Education, Sport and Culture

External Validation of the School Self-Review and Evaluation

Queen Elizabeth II High 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 Queen Elizabeth II High School SSRE included a visit to the school on Wednesday 5th February and Thursday 6th February 2020. The visit was made by Howard Marshall. He worked alongside Sue Moore, headteacher, and Joel Smith and Jan Gimbert, representing the DESC's Education Improvement Service.

Context

Queen Elizabeth II High School is situated in the town of Peel in the west of the Island. There are 730 pupils on roll with a teacher-pupil ratio of 14:1. Eleven per cent of the pupils receive free school meals. This is below the average for the Island. Twenty per cent have special education needs at 'school action', 'school action plus' or 'higher level need'. This is below the Island average. One per cent are learning English as an additional language. This is also below the Island average.

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**
- **Governance**
- **Teaching for Learning**

Achievement against Prior Attainment

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

- Investigate how effective Achievement against Prior Attainment is in Key Stage 3 (KS3)
- Investigate how effective Achievement against Prior Attainment is from Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 4 (KS4)
- Investigate how effective Achievement against Prior Attainment is in Key Stage 5 (KS5)
- Investigate the extent to which most pupils have developed a love of learning
- Confirm that Achievement against Prior Attainment is 'very effective' overall

Governance

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

- Governors and the leadership team work with the staff to agree the vision and articulate the strategic direction of the school
- Governors evaluate each section of SSRE using the evidence available to them
- Governors review and monitor standards and rigorously hold senior leaders to account
- The governors work to a cycle of meetings, incorporating strategic planning and evaluation.
- Governance is 'very effective' overall

Teaching for Learning

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

- A growth mindset culture towards learning is promoted and continues to develop in many areas across the school
- Pupils are able to reflect on their learning, tracking and monitoring to identify strengths and weaknesses
- A large majority of teachers promote a culture of challenge, high aspirations and ambition
- Teaching staff show an excellent command of areas of learning and subject knowledge
- Teaching for Learning is 'very effective' overall

The Validation Activities

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

- toured the school led by the head girl and head boy
- observed lessons
- observed lunchtime
- observed an assembly
- visited tutor periods
- looked at a number of documents
- talked with a group of teachers
- talked with a group of middle leaders
- talked with a group of pupils
- talked with a group of parents
- talked with a group of governors
- talked with leaders responsible for inclusion
- talked with the leader responsible for assessment
- talked with the leadership team about the SSRE process

Findings

Summary

The school knows itself well. It demonstrates that it has robust evaluative evidence to strategically and systematically plan for continuous improvement. This evidence requires greater aggregation and synthesis. There are aspects of the SSRE, which is a concise document, where judgments are made without sufficient direction to the evaluative evidence that is available.

Achievement against Prior Attainment

Based on the results of pupils who completed Key Stage 3 in 2019 progress in mathematics is 'very effective' when compared with the Island's average with a large majority of pupils making four or more sublevels of progress. Progress in English is 'not yet effective' with 41% of pupils making four or more sublevels of progress.

Progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics is 'inspirational' for those pupils completing Key Stage 4 in 2019. The progress that pupils have made is also above the Island's rolling average for the last 5 years. This is very impressive.

Based on the results of pupils who completed Key Stage 5 in 2019 the progress that pupils make in Key Stage 5 is 'effective'.

The school has evidence from lesson observations and surveys that, within lessons and units of work, most pupils have developed a 'love of learning'. Our discussions with pupils and visits to classrooms confirm this judgment. There is also achievement evidence and lesson observation records to support that pupils acquire and apply skills, knowledge and understanding within lessons and units of work.

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

Governance

The vision for the school was updated in 2017 with input and challenge from governors. The validation team's discussion with the governors confirms that they are clear about the school's priorities for improvement and are partners in strategically directing the future of the school.

Governors are updated on aspects of the SSRE at their meetings and challenge the school on the quality and accuracy of their judgments. This includes reviewing and monitoring standards and holding senior leaders to account. The validation team's review of the minutes of governors' meetings and discussions with governors and the headteacher indicate that there is an appropriate level of challenge and support.

The school has an impressive model for the systematic review and evaluation of the SSRE by governors. Each area of the SSRE is evaluated by governors on a rolling cycle. Minutes of meetings and the validation team's discussions with the governors and the headteacher indicate that this process is rigorous and robust. This is a good model for effective governance.

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

Teaching for Learning

The school has a range of evidence, including lesson observations and pupil interviews, that indicate that a growth mindset culture is both promoted and becoming embedded across the school. The pupils that the validation team spoke with were able to explain how they used their 'growth mindset' to further their learning.

The quality of the feedback about learning given to pupils has improved significantly over the past two years. This has supported improvements in the pupils' ability to reflect on their learning. The school recognises that this aspect is an area that requires consolidation. Pupils are increasingly able

to use feedback from tracking and monitoring to identify areas of their learning that require improvement.

The school has comprehensive evidence from lesson observations and pupil interviews to indicate that a large majority of teachers promote a culture of challenge, high aspirations and ambition. This evidence also supports their judgment that teaching staff show an excellent command of areas of learning and subject knowledge. The validation team's visit to classrooms and interviews with teachers support these judgments.

In addition, the validation team concurs with the headteacher that the major factor influencing the very impressive achievement in the school is the quality of teaching for learning.

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 several of these, including:

- A large majority of pupils are committed to their school community
- There are a large number of activities and initiatives that afford pupils opportunities to develop leadership skills
- Attendance at extra-curricular learning activities is very high
- Attainment at Key Stage 4 is 'very effective'
- Teachers include all pupils and relationships with pupils are strong throughout the school
- Tutors use tracking data with pupils to discuss their progress and identify those in need of support and intervention
- Parents, governors and the wider community hold the school in high regard
- The school is very effective in gathering and acting upon feedback for evaluation and improvement
- Strategic collaboration with other schools on post 16 provision has enabled pupils to access a broad curriculum
- A large majority of pupils have a strong sense of well-being and develop well socially and emotionally

Conclusion

The school demonstrates that it has robust evaluative evidence to strategically and systematically plan for continuous improvement. This evidence requires greater aggregation and synthesis. There are aspects of the SSRE, which is a concise document, where judgments are made without sufficient direction to the evaluative evidence that is available. The SSRE informs the School Development Plan. This plan would benefit from explicit targets for the desired improvement in pupil learning.

The school knows itself well and is in a good position to continue with its agenda for improvement.

Howard Marshall
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