

Ballakermeen High School

Ballakermeen High School recently underwent an external validation of its self-evaluation process, which involved confirming the judgments the school has made about itself across certain areas. The validation of the school self review and evaluation covered the full range of the school's judgments, but focused on three specific aspects.

- Achievement against prior attainment
- Teaching and learning
- Distributed leadership

Achievement against prior attainment

Student achievement at both GCSE and Advanced levels was judged to be a 'significant strength'. Overall, most students make better than average progress over time given that their starting points. The validation team concurred with the school's judgment that achievement against prior attainment is 'good'.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is 'good' and is likely to be a 'significant strength' if current progress is maintained. The following strengths were observed:

- All lessons were found to begin with a clear learning intention, which was explained well.
- Students understood what they were learning and how to improve.
- Lessons routinely engage, challenge and motivate the students.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and provide helpful feedback. Students learn both independently and collaboratively.
- Teachers help students to learn beyond the confines of the school through a range of strategies including homework, support sessions and educational visits.
- Teachers in all subjects make good use of assessment information to plan lessons and take students forward in their learning.

Distributed leadership

Leadership is distributed throughout the school and both teachers and middle leaders feel 'trusted' and 'empowered'. The use of coaching and mentoring of teachers is developing well and the school's appraisal system encourages them to take responsibility for school improvement. Distributed leadership was found to be one of the main reasons for the improvements in attainment and achievement across the school. Overall the validation team judged the school's distributed leadership to be a 'significant strength'.

Other areas are considered

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

- Attainment is 'good' at GCSE and Advanced level;
- Effective analysis of attainment data is being used to target groups and individuals in need of support and challenge;
- The school values and develops the 6R learning dispositions;
- Students are safe as a result of the school's approach to safeguarding;
- The behaviour and engagement of students in lessons is a significant strength;

- Students are well-prepared for their life beyond compulsory education;
- Student artwork and photographs celebrate learning in the school, and displays promote learning in classrooms;
- The school provides good parent guidance for the students;
- Partnerships with parents and outside organisations were found to be impressive;
- The headteacher provides a strong vision and leadership for the school and the senior leadership is a significant strength;
- The school is successful in developing the whole student and does not exclusively target academic results.

Conclusion

The validation team agreed with the school about all judgments that it tested. The school knows itself very well and is in a very good position to improve further.

Mrs Adrienne Burnett
Headteacher
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