

## **Queen Elizabeth II High School**

Queen Elizabeth II High School recently received a validation visit which covered the full range of the school's SSRE judgments but focused on three specific aspects. These were:

- Achievement against prior attainment
- Learning and teaching
- Distributed leadership

### **Achievement against prior attainment**

*The validation team concurs with the school's judgment that achievement against prior attainment is 'good'.*

The progress of students between the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics is a significant strength, with progress in science good. Most students make at least three levels of progress in these subjects. Performance in other subjects is more variable. The progress made by students in Key Stage 5 is in line with expectations and on an upward trajectory. Progress made by students in their A2 subjects is good with progress in AS subjects satisfactory. The progress made by boys has been identified as an area for improvement at Key Stage 4. Interventions are in place and the indications are that the progress made by both boys and girls has improved. In the lessons that the validation team visited, and from evidence of monitoring visits, it is evident that students are acquiring and applying their knowledge, skills and understanding and making progress in their learning. Overall, most students make better than average progress over time, given their starting points.

### **Learning and teaching**

*The validation team concurs with the school's judgment that learning and teaching is 'good'.*

The principles of assessment for learning are becoming embedded and this has led to improvements in the quality of learning and teaching. In most lessons the students are clear about what they are learning and how they will know that they have been successful. Students are improving their skills of self and peer assessment as a result of the opportunities they are given by teachers. The quality of feedback to students about their learning has improved significantly over the last 12 months and students informed the team that they are clear about where they are in their learning and what they need to do to improve. The validation team visits to classrooms confirmed that the quality of feedback is good. Students were observed learning both collaboratively and independently and were fully engaged in their activities. The school provides many opportunities for learning to be extended beyond the classroom. Students make good use of ICT to improve their learning: for example, through recording and evaluating learning on iPads and by using software to present their learning. The validation team observed and saw in books that the learning needs of students are met through differentiated tasks and, more often, expected outcomes.

### **Distributed leadership**

*The validation team concurs with the school's judgment that distributed leadership is 'good'.*

The leadership team distributes leadership throughout the organisation. Middle leaders informed us that they are empowered to take responsibility for their areas of learning and 'trusted' to make plans and interventions that will improve learning. Teachers informed us that they are able to take responsibility for aspects of learning in the school and lead their colleagues in professional development sessions. There is a range of working groups that focus on improving learning and teaching that all teachers can join. Students explained how they are involved in interviewing new teachers, leading training for teachers and reviewing school policies.

**Other areas 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 in the academic year 2014-2015 is a significant strength in the school.
- Relationships between students and teachers and students are very good.
- The curriculum meets statutory requirements referencing the Manx context where appropriate.
- Personal learning and thinking skills are firmly embedded across the curriculum.
- Display celebrates success and supports learning.
- Care for students is good, for example, students have received significant input around current safeguarding issues.
- Guidance and support is good and the school works hard to improve what is available to students.
- The school is working collaboratively and effectively to improve curriculum provision in Key Stage 5.
- Strategic leadership is good, with teaching and learning being promoted as the central focus of the school.
- The school's tracking system is excellent and is being well used to identify where intervention is needed.
- In addition, the validation team agreed that the school has a pioneering approach to the training of new teachers.

**Conclusion**

As a result of strong leadership, the school has improved over the past few months in a number of ways: for instance, with assessment for learning. The SSRE is generally well written. It does not always fully reference the grade descriptors to inform its judgments. The school knows itself well and is in a good position to improve further.

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