

Graham Reeves Ltd *for* **The Isle of Man Department of Education, Sport and Culture**

External Validation of the School Self-Review and Evaluation

Ballakermeen 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 Ballakermeen High School SSRE included a visit to the school on Wednesday 28th March and Thursday 29th March 2018. The visit was made by Howard Marshall. He worked alongside Adrienne Burnett, headteacher, and Geoff Moorcroft and Jan Gimbert, representing the DESC's Education Improvement Service.

Context

Ballakermeen High School is situated in the town of Douglas in the east of the Island. There are 1,548 pupils on roll with a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:14. 20% of the pupils receive free school meals. This is slightly above the average for the Island. 19.3% have special education needs. This is above the Island average. 10% are learning English as an additional language. This is significantly above the Island average.

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:

- Progress in English at Key Stage 3 can be judged as 'effective'
- Progress in mathematics at Key Stage 3 can be judged as 'not yet effective'
- Progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 is 'effective' in both mathematics and English
- Progress in Key Stage 5 is 'very effective'
- Pupils make very good progress in their learning
- Achievement against prior attainment 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:

- Pupils are motivated and believe they can be successful
- Pupils drive their own progress through excellent understanding of the requirements for each grade
- Lessons are objective led and the learning objectives are discussed and displayed
- Pupil engagement in lessons is very good
- 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:

- Policies and procedures for child protection have been published and are available to all staff
- All staff have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training within the last two years
- Safeguarding decisions are acted on promptly
- All child protection matters are referred to the designated safeguarding leads who manage them, making referrals to external agencies when appropriate
- Keeping Safe 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
- observed lessons
- observed lunchtime
- 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 leaders responsible for inclusion
- talked with the leader responsible for safeguarding
- talked with the leaders responsible for assessment
- talked with the leader responsible for faculty focus

Findings

Summary

The school knows itself well and is therefore in a good position to continue planning for further improvement.

Achievement against Prior Attainment

Overall, pupils make very good progress in their learning. Progress in English at Key Stage 3 is 'effective' and 'not yet effective' in mathematics when compared with the Island's average. Progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 according to the school's analysis is judged as 'effective'. This is a correct judgement using the school's information. The DESC's analysis indicates that in one of the six measures used: average levels of progress in mathematics, the

correct judgement should be ‘not yet effective’. In the other five measures for English and mathematics achievement is, according to the DESC analysis, above the Island’s average. The school’s data analysis shows that progress is very good in the large majority of other subjects.

The progress that pupils make in Key Stage 5 is impressive and correctly judged as ‘very effective’.

The school has evidence from lesson observations and surveys – supported by professional judgements – that, within lessons and units of work, the large majority of pupils have developed a ‘love of learning’. Our discussions with pupils and visits to classrooms confirmed this judgement.

The validation team concurs with the school’s judgment that Achievement against Prior Attainment should be judged as ‘effective’ overall.

Teaching for Learning

The school fosters and instils a ‘can do’ attitude in pupils and this motivates the pupils to believe that they can be successful in their learning. All pupils have targets in all subjects. Many are developing strategies, based on a knowledge of what they mean, to help them achieve these targets. Nearly all lessons have learning objectives. Some of these objectives clearly set out the learning that is to happen. In some cases the objectives are not sufficiently focused on learning and detail the tasks that are to be undertaken. In the lessons visited during the validation pupil engagement with their learning was very good. The school has considerable evidence that this is usually the case.

The validation team concurs with the school’s judgment that Teaching for Learning should be judged as ‘effective’ overall.

Keeping Safe

In our discussions with pupils and teachers it is clear that ‘Keeping Safe’ is an area of high priority in the school. All the pupils, teachers and parents that we spoke to during our visit spoke highly of the procedures for safeguarding and child protection. All staff have signed a document stating that they have read the safeguarding policy and have attended safeguarding training in the last two years. The designated safeguarding leads are identified on posters which highlight key procedures. All child protection matters are managed by the safeguarding leads who refer to external agencies where appropriate. Pupils learn in several contexts, for example PSHE, about how to assess risk and keep themselves safe. Surveys and discussions with pupils indicate that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they experience any problems.

The validation team concurs with the school’s judgment that Keeping Safe should be judged as ‘very effective’ overall.

Other Areas Considered

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

- Pupils are happy and proud of their school
- Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers, are very good

- Extra-curricular clubs and activities enable pupils to showcase their talents, skills and aspirations
- Key Stage 5 attainment is 'very effective' and above the Island's averages
- Leadership of the school is 'very effective'. The new senior leadership team (SLT) is demonstrating an open-minded and collaborative approach to school improvement
- Messages from the SLT are cascaded to colleagues through channels such as middle leaders
- The recently introduced 'faculty focus' is proving to be a powerful driver in school improvement planning and practice
- Distributed leadership is exemplified by the school's Joint Practice Development which is supporting staff collaboration and the sharing of research based practice
- Daily communication is efficient and accessible
- The school appraisal system is robust and closely linked to the school improvement plan
- Lesson observations and pupil feedback confirms that behaviour is generally very good
- The curriculum enables pupils to access learning opportunities that are varied, engaging and challenging
- A collaborative Key Stage 5 curriculum between the school and St Ninian's High School is giving pupils broader choices
- The Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition programme is highly regarded by stakeholders
- Parents hold the school in high regard
- Positive relationships with parents is a strength of the school
- The PSHE curriculum has been redeveloped and updated to better reflect the issues and challenges facing pupils
- The National Sports Centre is utilised during curriculum time
- E-safety is taught to all pupils in conjunction with outside agencies including the police

Conclusion

The SSRE requires improvement. The school knows itself far better than the current SSRE captures. The document is written in sections and against headings taken directly from the grade descriptors. A few sections include judgments against the grade descriptors. Several sections describe the current context without making judgements that will help the school to identify targets for improving learning or provision in the school improvement and development plans. When challenged to provide evidence to support overall judgements made in the SSRE the school was able to do so. The evidence is there. It now needs to be written succinctly into the appropriate sections of the SSRE.

The school knows itself well and is therefore in a good position to continue planning for further improvement.

Howard Marshall
April 2018