

Graham Reeves Ltd

for

The Isle of Man Department of Education, Sport and Culture

External Validation of the School Self-Review and Evaluation

Willaston 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 Willaston SSRE included a visit to the school on Wednesday 23 May 2018. The visit was made by Graham Reeves. He worked alongside Rose Burton, headteacher, and Chrissy Callaghan, representing the DESC's Education Improvement Service.

Context

Willaston Primary School is situated to the north west of Douglas. It serves a large catchment area of mainly local authority housing with some relatively new owner-occupied properties. A major regeneration project is currently underway in the area. There are 197 pupils on roll, organised into eight classes. Thirty per cent of pupils receive free school meals. This is well above the Island average. Thirty one per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs register. This is a smaller percentage than in the past but still above the Island average. Three per cent of pupils are learning English as an additional language.

There are 9.6 full-time equivalent teachers, including the headteacher, and 6.6 full-time equivalent classroom support staff.

The school opened in 1955. The buildings are set in extensive grounds adjacent to the University College, Isle of Man.

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**
- **Leadership**
- **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:

- The overall progress of pupils who completed the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1, and Key Stage 2 in 2017 can be judged as 'very effective'
- Progress made in Personal, Social and Emotional Development and in Communication and Language during the Foundation Stage can be judged as 'inspirational'
- Progress made in reading during Key Stage 2 can be judged as 'inspirational'
- A large majority of children have a love of learning
- Achievement against Prior Attainment can be judged as 'very effective' overall.

Leadership

The school judges this aspect as 'very effective'.

It was chosen for consideration in order to confirm that:

- Leadership enthuses and inspires colleagues and supports professional development, resulting in reflective practice supported by evidence-based research
- Leaders clearly articulate the vision and priorities for school improvement
- High aspirations, which are an integral part of the school vision, are consistently given high priority
- Leaders are committed to educational inclusion and promote equality and diversity
- Leadership can be judged as 'very effective' overall.

Teaching for Learning

The school judges this aspect as 'very effective'.

It was chosen for consideration in order to confirm that:

- Growth mindset is promoted, discussed and modelled in the vast majority of classes
- The vast majority of teachers plan for a range of learners' needs, giving appropriate levels of challenge as well as planning for individual learners' needs
- The learning of pupils with special education needs is supported, monitored closely and evaluated, and actions are raised
- Effective 'assessment for learning' practice is embedded in the vast majority of classrooms
- 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
- observed lessons
- observed playtime and lunchtime
- looked at a number of documents
- talked with a group of teachers
- talked with a group of pupils
- talked with a group of parents and carers.

Findings

Summary

The school knows itself well and is in a very good position to continue the considerable improvement of recent years.

Achievement against Prior Attainment

A large majority of pupils who completed the Foundation Stage in 2017 made five or more 'jumps' in 16 of the 17 areas of learning. This means that achievement in the Foundation Stage can be judged as 'very effective' overall. Progress in Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication and Language can be judged as 'inspirational'.

A large majority of pupils who completed Key Stage 1 in 2017 had progressed by at least 3 sub levels in all the core subjects over the course of the key stage. A large majority of pupils completing Key Stage 2 had progressed by at least six sub levels in all the core subjects. All pupils had progressed by at least six sub levels in reading. Therefore, overall achievement at Key Stages 1 and 2 can be judged as 'very effective' and achievement in reading at Key Stage 2 can be judged as 'inspirational'.

The school's own records show that a large majority of pupils have a love of learning. This was confirmed by the observations of the validation team.

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

Leadership

School leaders inspire and enthuse colleagues and clearly articulate the school's vision, which underpins its activities, and the priorities for improvement. A particular feature of the school is the high quality of professional development leading to reflective practice supported by research.

The school has an atmosphere of high aspirations emanating from the leadership. Teachers have high aspirations for the pupils and pupils have high aspirations for themselves.

Leaders have a commitment to inclusion and this is evident in, for example, the support and challenge provided for pupils of all abilities.

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

Teaching for Learning

The school promotes the features of 'growth mindset'. This was particularly demonstrated to the validation team when pupils spoke about the desire to 'push' themselves.

Teachers each have an overarching plan for pupils' learning and constantly review this based on the response and needs of individuals and groups. Pupils with special educational needs, in particular, are well-supported. Their learning is tracked in some detail and the impact of interventions is monitored.

'Assessment for learning' is well-established in the school and pupils were able to articulate this to the validation team in terms of a sequence of self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment.

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

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 many of these judgments, including:

- Pupils show high levels of engagement. The vast majority are ready to learn and are becoming reflective. From observations and conversations, the validation team found that pupils were developing a strong sense of themselves as learners.
- The vast majority of pupils show relationships that are positive. They develop well socially and emotionally.
- School leaders value and encourage innovation.
- 'Reflection sheets' are used in all classes to identify how pupils believe their learning can be extended.
- Parents hold the school in high regard.
- The school is effective at helping pupils feel safe and deal sensibly with risk. The validation team noted the good use made of the school grounds to promote a sense of managed risk.
- Pupils are aware of how to stay safe online.
- The work of the child and family support worker is highly effective.

In addition, the validation team noted that while attainment in the core subjects at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 was 'not yet effective' in 2017, it is likely to be at least 'effective' at the end of the current school year.

Conclusion

The school knows itself well and is in a very good position to continue the considerable improvement of recent years.

The SSRE is well set-out. In places it could be more focused on the relevant grade descriptors. It is a very full professional document with information about various activities and initiatives and their impact on pupils as learners.

Graham Reeves
June 2018