

St Mary's R.C Primary School

St Mary's R.C Primary School recently received an external validation of its self review process, which involved confirming the judgments the school has made about itself across certain areas. For the purpose of the validation, three aspects were looked at in detail:

- Achievement against prior attainment
- Teaching for Learning
- Partnerships with parents / carers

Achievement against prior attainment

This section of the SSRE was not written well enough against the criteria of the relevant grade descriptors. This is the result of misreading and misunderstanding the criteria. From the analysis provided on the day of the validation visit it is clear that a large majority of pupils make expected or better progress over time in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Progress across Key Stage 2 is above expectations in science and mathematics and below in reading and writing.

The limited evidence for 'love of learning' means that the validation team did not have enough information to make an overall judgment. The team's discussions with a small number of pupils and parents did indicate that pupils do want to learn and enjoy their learning. A recent note to the school following a visit from the DESC's Education Improvement Service stated that 'pupils were enthused by their learning and could talk about how the 6Rs helped them to learn'. The school needs to systematically gather more evidence to support its judgments.

The validation team does not concur with the school's judgment that Achievement Against prior Attainment should be judged as 'very effective' overall.

Teaching for Learning

This section of the SSRE is confusing. Some aspects of Teaching for Learning were judged to be 'not yet effective' but the commentary suggests 'very effective' practice.

The school does not have sufficient evidence to support the judgments made regarding the culture of challenge or meta-cognitive strategies. During visits to classrooms and from conversations with pupils it was clear that they are encouraged to reflect on their learning and, at times, choose their level of challenge based on these reflections. Pupils also informed the team that teachers use a range of strategies to help them to make progress in their learning.

The school's approach to tracking of assessment identifies the progress being made by individual pupils and informs future planning. Each pupil has targets for reading, writing and mathematics. This target setting is a real strength of the school.

The validation team cannot concur with the school's overall judgment that Teaching for Learning should be judged as 'effective' overall as the evidence is not presented clearly in the SSRE. While there are certainly aspects that are at least 'effective', the evidence as set out in the SSRE does not support a judgment of 'effective'. Instead it should be judged as 'not yet effective'

Partnerships with parents / carers

The school has very little evidence to support the judgments made in this aspect. However, from conversations with parents and anecdotal evidence from teachers it appears that the wider school community does hold the school in high regard. Parents informed the team that communication about day to day issues and direct enquiries are effective. However, at present there are no formal mechanisms to gather parental views about the school's provision. The school communicates information to parents about the learning that is to take place and also how well their children are learning. Parents informed the team that on an individual basis they are able to ask the school how they can support their child and advice is provided. Currently, the school does not run workshops for parents to help them to become more involved with their child's learning.

The validation team does not concur with the school's judgment that Partnerships with Parents should be judged as 'effective' overall. This is due to a lack of evidence. Instead it should be judged as 'not yet 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 and examples set out in the SSRE. The validation team notes:

- A large majority of the pupils are proud of and committed to their school
- Pupil voice is promoted through Philosophy for Children, circle time and Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)
- Through the schools embedded use of the 6Rs the vast majority of pupils are aware of the next stages of their learning including transition
- During breaks it is apparent that children look after themselves and others in line with the school's Catholic ethos
- The school has forged strong links with the Church
- Parents, staff and pupils informed the validation team that the school has effective policies for anti-bullying, behaviour and e-safety.

In addition, the validation team notes that the school is also held in very high regard by parents and staff and that behaviour is good.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the school does not know itself well enough. The SSRE does not accurately reflect practice and provision at the school. There are many good things happening in the school that are not evidenced in the SSRE. The SSRE is not written clearly enough against the supplied criteria to evidence that its judgments are accurate. The school needs to gather robust evidence that illustrates how it is meeting the criteria. This will place it in a stronger position to plan for improvement.

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