

Graham Reeves Ltd

for

The Isle of Man Department of Education, Sport and Culture

External Validation of the School Self-Review and Evaluation

Henry Bloom Noble Primary 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 Henry Bloom Noble SSRE included a visit to the school on Tuesday 12 March 2019. The visit was made by Howard Marshall. He worked alongside Ian Walmsley, headteacher, and Chrissy Callaghan, representing the DESC's Education Improvement Service.

Context

Henry Bloom Noble Primary School is the fifth largest primary school on the Island and was formed in April 2014 from the amalgamation of Ballacloan Infant School and Fairfield Junior School. The school moved into new, purpose built, accommodation on the site of the former Noble's Hospital in September 2016.

The school is located in Douglas, in the middle of a large, densely populated catchment area that contains much of the island's finance and commercial district and the town's main shopping area. It also includes a wide range of residential properties and flats which include a proportion of emergency housing as well as owner-occupied and rented accommodation.

The school has roll has increased by over 120 in the past 30 months. There are currently 368 pupils on roll. There are 13 classes plus a 'Nurture Room'. 24.5 per cent of pupils receive free school meals. This is higher than the Island average. It excludes a number of pupils who might otherwise be entitled to free meals but who originate from outside the European Union and have moved to the Island within the past five years. 22.5 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs (SEN). This is above the Island average. The school roll is very diverse and 32 per cent of pupils are learning English as an additional language (EAL). This is the highest percentage on the Island.

There are 15 full-time equivalent teachers, including the headteacher, supported by 15 full-time equivalent Education Support Officers (ESO). The unit has a unit manager and 6 ESOs.

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
Teaching for Learning
Partnerships with Parents/Carers

Achievement against Prior Attainment

The school judges this aspect as 'effective'. It was chosen for consideration in order to:

- Investigate the extent to which pupils in the Foundation Stage make expected or better progress over time in line with the agreed Isle of Man benchmarks
- Confirm that Achievement in Key Stage 1 (KS) is 'effective'
- Investigate the extent to which pupils in Key Stage 2 (KS2) make expected or better progress over time in line with the agreed Isle of Man benchmarks
- Confirm that a large majority of children have a well-developed love of learning
- Confirm that Achievement against Prior Attainment is 'effective' overall

Teaching for Learning

The school judges this aspect as 'effective'. It was chosen for consideration in order to confirm that:

- There is a growth mindset culture evident at the school
- A large majority of pupils are able to work both collaboratively and independently
- The majority of staff promote a culture of challenge, high aspirations and ambition
- Assessment for learning is evident in all classes
- Pupil progress meetings identify barriers to learning and strategies for improvement
- Teaching for Learning can be judged as 'effective' overall

Partnerships with Parents/Carers

The school judges this aspect as 'very effective'. It was chosen for consideration in order to confirm that:

- The school is held in high regard by parents and carers
- A very large majority of parents consider that the school works in partnership with them to support their child's welfare and learning.
- Parents and carers are consulted about school improvement with information gathered and feedback acted upon for improvement purposes
- Partnerships with Parents/Carers 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 an assembly
- 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

Findings

Summary

The school knows itself well. It is in a good position to plan for further improvement.

Achievement against Prior Attainment

The school's tracking of pupil progress shows that a large majority of pupils make five or more jumps in nine of the areas of the Early Learning Goals. This indicates that progress in the Foundation Stage is 'effective'. The school made an incorrect judgment for the foundation stage based on a misunderstanding of the SSRE criteria. In Key Stage 1 a large majority of pupils make three or more sub levels of progress in writing, mathematics and science with a majority of pupils making this progress in reading.

Achievement against Prior Attainment is 'effective' in Key Stage 1. A very large majority of pupils make six or more sub levels of progress over Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics with a majority of pupils making this progress in science. Achievement against prior attainment is 'effective' and close to being 'very effective' in Key Stage 2.

From the learning walks and interviews conducted by school leaders, the outcomes reached by pupils and from our visits to classrooms and discussions with pupils it is clear that pupils acquire and apply skills, knowledge and understanding in their lessons.

From our discussions with pupils and from the school's monitoring activities it is evident that a large majority of pupils have a well-developed love of learning.

The school's tracking of progress in learning is impressive. Incorrect judgments are made in the SSRE based on a misunderstanding of the criteria. These will need to be corrected. The overall judgment made by the school is, however, correct.

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

Teaching for Learning

The school has embedded a Grit, Risk, Optimism, Work (GROW) model which encourages a 'safe to fail' culture. This model incorporates the development of a growth mindset and the 6Rs. Pupils were keen to share with the validation team that making mistakes was a key part of learning. A growth mindset is evident in the school.

From the school's monitoring evidence, the validation team's conversations with pupils and teachers and visits to classrooms it is evident that pupils are able to work both collaboratively and independently.

Teachers use an approach where, in some aspects of their learning, pupils are able to choose the level of challenge appropriate to them. The validation team observed pupils making these choices. The school's monitoring shows that teachers promote challenge and set aspirational targets. The validation team agreed that individual pupil targets are aspirational.

Assessment for learning strategies are evident in all classes. The school promotes the use of success criteria which helps pupils to know what is expected of them. The objectives for lessons are sometimes tasks for completion rather than explicit learning outcomes. The school is aware that this aspect can be improved.

The school has very effective procedures for identifying next steps in learning for individual pupils. There are pupil progress meetings each term which analyse the progress that has been made and identify next steps in learning.

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

Partnerships with Parents/Carers

Responses to parent surveys and the validation team's conversations with parents confirm that the school is held in high regard. Parents confirmed that the school has an open-door policy, that teachers and leaders are approachable and that they are kept well informed about their child's progress and well-being. Parents also confirmed the survey's finding that a very large majority of the parents consider that the school works in partnership with them to support their child's well-being and learning. Examples cited include the 'Parents as Partners Programme' and the 'Families and Schools Together' (FAST).

Parents also confirmed that the school consults with them about school improvement initiatives. They welcome the opportunity to contribute to decisions that will impact on their children's learning and well-being. One example of this was the presentation and discussions about sex and relationships education. Parents also contributed to the discussions about the school's ethos and vision. The school displays a version of the School Improvement Plan in the entrance hall which helps parents to be aware of priorities for improvement.

The validation team concurs with the school's judgment that Partnership with Parent/Carers is 'very effective' overall.

Other Areas Considered

In addition to the three specific aspects of the SSRE on which it focused, the validation team considered other judgments and examples set out in the SSRE. It concurs with many of these, including:

- The large majority of pupils are committed to their school community and are proud to attend the school
- The personal, social and health education (PSHE) scheme used ensures that all pupils are given the opportunity to engage in dialogue about their well-being
- Attainment in the school is 'not yet effective'
- Leadership enthuses and inspires staff at the school to try out new ideas and take risks
- Robust systems are in place to track pupils' attainment and progress
- The school is proactive in supporting other local schools
- Transition to secondary school is successful
- The school has embraced the Forest School ethos and this is providing very good learning opportunities for pupils
- Communication with parents regarding their approach to safeguarding is good

In addition, the validation team is pleased to note that the school is held in high regard by pupils, parents and staff and that, on the day of its visit, behaviour was very good.

Conclusion

The SSRE is, in the main, a clear document that demonstrates that the school knows itself well. The sections on attainment and achievement require updating using the correct interpretation of the criteria. The SSRE informs the school improvement plan.

The school knows itself well. It is in a good position to move forward on its plans for further improvement.

Howard Marshall
March 2019