

External Validation 2019

Henry Bloom Noble School Validation Report

Henry Bloom Noble recently undertook an external validation of its School Self Review and Evaluation process (SSRE). The school was visited on Tuesday 12th March 2019 by Howard Marshall. He worked alongside myself and Chrissy Callaghan who represented the DESC's Education Improvement Service.

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

The Validation activities and findings are summarised below

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 and talked with a group of teachers, pupils and parents

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. The school made an incorrect judgment for the foundation stage based on a misunderstanding of the SSRE criteria. This indicates that progress in the Foundation Stage is 'effective'. 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. The school's tracking of progress in learning is impressive.

From the learning walks and interviews conducted by school leaders, the outcomes reached by pupils and from visits to classrooms and discussions with pupils it is clear that pupils acquire and apply skills, knowledge and understanding in their lessons. From 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 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 informs the school improvement plan and demonstrates that the school knows itself well and is in a good position to move forward on its plans for further improvement. The sections on attainment and achievement require updating using the correct interpretation of the criteria.

Mr I Walmsley
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