

The WCL Group for The Isle of Man Department of Education and Children

External Validation of the School Self-Review and Evaluation

Rushen 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 and Children (DEC) in consultation with the schools. The WCL Group has been commissioned by the Department to carry out an external validation of each school's SSRE. The validation of the Rushen Primary School SSRE culminated in a visit to the school on Tuesday 13th October 2015. The visit was made by Graham Reeves. He worked alongside Tom Thomson, headteacher, and Caroline Savin, representing the DEC's Education Improvement Service.

Context

Rushen Primary School is situated in Port St Mary in the southern part of the Island. Its catchment area of Port Erin includes both owner-occupied homes and local authority housing. A new housing estate is being built close by and this is expected to have some impact on the size of the school.

The school was originally opened in 1926. A separate infant school opened on the same site in 1974. The current establishment is the result of an amalgamation of the two schools in 1990, at which time there was further building work. The school stands in extensive grounds.

There are currently 254 pupils on roll. These are arranged into ten classes plus a special unit for children with severe learning needs. Thirty per cent of the pupils – including those in the unit – are on the register of special educational needs. This is higher than the Island average. Eight per cent of pupils receive free school meals. This is lower than the Island average. A very small number of pupils are learning English as an additional language.

There are 13.22 full time equivalent teachers including the headteacher and head of unit, and 8.32 classroom support staff, including three for the unit.

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**
- **Attitudes, Values and Personal Qualities**
- **Assessment**

Achievement against Prior Attainment

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

- Confirm that Achievement against Prior Attainment is Satisfactory overall
- Investigate the extent to which pupils make average or better than average progress over time in each of the various aspects and subjects in the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2
- Investigate the extent to which pupils, within lessons and units of work, acquire and apply skills, knowledge and understanding, demonstrating progress in their learning.

Attitudes, Values and Personal Qualities

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

- Attitudes, Values and Personal Qualities is Good overall
- The very large majority of pupils have a clear understanding of the potential impact of smoking and drugs on their health
- The large majority of pupils understand the nutritional benefits of different food types
- The vast majority of pupils know how to keep safe when using IT equipment, and what to do in uncomfortable situations
- Pupils are actively involved in participating in the wider community
- Pupils demonstrate that they have great initiative and can work very effectively to achieve positive results.

Assessment

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

- Assessment is Satisfactory overall
- The new tracking system introduced this year tracks cohorts of pupils and gives instant feedback relating to pupils' attainment in relation to expected levels of attainment; judgements are made as to which pupils need additional support or which areas of the curriculum need more focused attention
- Pupils are set targets and feedback is given to them to indicate the next steps they should be taking
- The use of developmental feedback is not yet consistent throughout the school
- The majority of pupils are offered challenges that meet and extend their learning; some of the challenges in some classes do not extend pupils' learning sufficiently.

The Validation Activities

To check and confirm the judgements 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 staff members
- talked with a group of pupils

- talked with a group of parents

Findings

Summary

The school knows itself well and is therefore in a good position to move forward.

Achievement against Prior Attainment

Many of the pupils who completed the Foundation Stage in July 2015 had made better than expected progress, meaning that Achievement at this level was at least Satisfactory. Most pupils who completed Year 2 had made better than expected progress over the course of Key Stage 1, meaning that Achievement through Key Stage 1 was Good. Fewer than half the pupils completing Year 6 in July 2015 had made better than expected progress over the course of Key Stage 2. In the case of reading, hardly any pupils made better than expected progress. This means that Achievement through Key Stage 2 was barely satisfactory. The school is aware of this issue and is taking action to correct it. It expects rates of progress to improve in the future.

Available evidence for the school as a whole suggests that, within lessons and units of work most pupils acquire and apply skills, knowledge and understanding, demonstrating progress in their learning.

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

Attitudes, Values and Personal Qualities

Pupils throughout the school know about the importance of healthy eating and understand the nutritional benefits of different food types. Older pupils have a clear understanding of the potential impact of smoking and drugs on their health.

Pupils know how to keep safe when using IT equipment, and the older ones know what to do in uncomfortable situations.

Pupils are actively involved in participating in the wider community through, for example, singing to the elderly, supporting the local arts garden, participating in sports events, taking part in community activities and raising money for charities. Through such things as the School Council, Eco Committee, Healthy Schools Committee and Rights, Respects and Responsibilities Committee, pupils demonstrate that they have great initiative and can work very effectively to achieve positive results.

The validation team concurs with the school's judgement that Attitudes, Values and Personal Qualities is Good overall.

Assessment

The school has introduced a new tracking system to track children's attainment and progress. This provides information is used to identify pupils who need additional support and which areas of the curriculum need more focused attention. It has, for example identified that it needs to pay more attention to the learning and teaching of mathematics.

Teachers set targets for pupils which indicate the next steps they should be taking. Parents are told the National Curriculum levels and sublevels towards which their children are working and are given guidance about how they can support them to achieve their targets. The use of developmental feedback to pupils is not yet consistent throughout the school.

It is a particular feature of the school that pupils are offered challenges to extend their learning. Some of these challenges could be more demanding.

The validation team concurs with the school's judgement that Assessment is Satisfactory overall.

Other Areas Considered

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

- Teachers refer to pupils' 'learning muscles' in their medium term plans and in classroom displays.
- Classrooms are organised to enable pupils to work independently.
- There is still a lack of understanding in some classes of learning objectives and success criteria.
- 'Visual Timetabling' and 'Signalong' support the curriculum in the special unit.
- The use of 'working walls' is developing in some classes.
- 'Continuous Provision' is being promoted as a means of engaging pupils in independent learning, although the level of challenge is not sufficient for some.
- The school is well provided for in respect of learning resources that enable pupils to develop their learning.
- The school environment is well-designed and adapted to support the needs of all the pupils.
- Specific adaptation in the special unit is designed to accommodate pupils with any need. The facility is altered according to the needs of the pupils who attend it.
- Year 6 pupils 'buddy up' with new Reception pupils. This is valued and enjoyed by all.
- Pupils feel safe and know what to do if they have any concerns.
- The school keeps parents informed about what their pupils are learning.
- The school has good relationships with its local secondary school and playgroups.
- The transition system between primary and secondary school works well.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of educational inclusion.

Conclusion

The school knows itself well. It is therefore in a very good position to move forward, particularly in ensuring that progress is consistently good across the school. The SSRE is clear and well written. In a small number of sections there is insufficient reference to the relevant grade descriptors

Graham Reeves
October 2015