

Ballacottier Primary School

Ballacottier Primary School recently took part in an external validation which involved confirming the judgments the school made about itself across certain areas.

Three aspects were looked at in detail:

- Achievement against prior attainment
- Leadership
- Teaching for Learning

Achievement against prior attainment

Of those pupils who completed the Foundation Stage at the end of the 2016-2017 school year, 89% had made five jumps in any 13 strands of the Early Learning Goals. This is judged as 'very effective'. All of those who completed Key Stage 1 had, during the key stage, progressed by three sub levels in speaking and listening, reading and science. 97% had progressed by three or more sub levels in writing and mathematics. This is judged as 'inspirational'. All those pupils who completed Key Stage 2 had progressed by 6 or more sub levels during the key stage. The figures for speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics were 97%, 97%, 88% and 91% respectively. This is judged as 'very effective'.

The school has evidence from lesson observations and book perusals supported by professional judgements that, within lessons and units of work, the large majority of pupils have developed a love of learning and make very good progress in their learning.

The validation team concurs with the school's judgment that achievement against prior attainment is 'very effective' overall.

Leadership

The headteacher and senior team promote a clear, shared vision which reflects children's needs and interests and demonstrates a clear sense of purpose and high aspirations in a context where innovation and considered risk-taking is valued. A small group of teachers is drafting a new vision statement and all staff will be able to comment on and contribute to this before it is finalised. The headteacher and senior leaders make use of a variety of viewpoints and sources of evidence when they undertake strategic planning. While the priorities set out in the school improvement plan are mostly based on an analysis of the situation, they are not always clearly linked to the evidence and judgements that are set out in the SSRE.

Leaders have a clear understanding of educational inclusion and are committed to running a fair and inclusive school. The validation team regards this as a particular strength.

Senior leaders develop other staff by sharing leadership responsibilities and organising relevant training to further develop their skills. The validation team notes that this approach has led to some valuable school-wide initiatives, and regards it as another particular strength.

The validation team concurs with the school's judgment that leadership should be judged as 'very effective' overall

Teaching for Learning

Teachers throughout the school use 'challenges' which help pupils to develop independence. Classroom practice provides opportunities, appropriate for their age and ability, for pupils to direct their own learning. Teachers have high expectations and encourage, motivate and challenge pupils. Teachers use the school's assessment processes to ensure that pupils' progress is tracked rigorously

The validation team concurs with the school's judgment that leadership should be judged as 'very effective' overall

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. It concurs with many of these, including:

- A large majority of pupils are committed to their school community, are very proud of it, engage in dialogue about decisions related to their learning and wellbeing and display leadership skills.
- All staff, pupils and other stakeholders are well informed because there are very good communication systems.
- Effective pupil tracking systems are in place and the school analyses pupils' performance.
- The large majority of pupils are challenged, enthusiastic, focused and engaged with their learning.
- Pupils from the Rainbow Room are fully integrated into mainstream wherever possible.
- Parents feel that any complaints are dealt with promptly and effectively and that their views are valued.
- The School Council is a forum where pupils are able to raise concerns.
- The school encourages pupils to engage in physical activities.
- There are very few reported incidents at playtimes of fighting, bullying or a lack of friends.

In addition, the validation team is pleased to note that the school is held in very high regard by pupils, parents and staff.

Conclusion

The SSRE is a clear document that demonstrates that the school knows itself well. In addition, it has further evaluative evidence and judgments that are not yet included in the new SSRE format. The school is aware that it needs to add such information so that it can show that in producing its school improvement plan it has used the available evidence to identify specific aspects of pupils' learning that it intends to improve.

Mrs Carol Walsh
Headteacher
December 2017