



EDUCATION

A STATES OF GUERNSEY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

T R I B A L

ST SAMPSON'S INFANT SCHOOL



Summary of Validation Report for Parents and Learners

March 2011

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Introduction

The validation was carried out by a team of two validators, who spent three days in the school observing lessons, talking with pupils and looking at their work, engaging in discussions with staff and parents, looking at school records and other documentation, and scrutinising returns to the parents' questionnaire.

Main findings

The validation confirmed most of the school's own judgements about its performance. Where they differed, this was not by a great deal. Most importantly, validators confirmed the school's central priorities for improvement.

This is a very happy and 'buzzy' school. Its tone and ethos come directly from the headteacher who, like all members of staff, is dedicated to the pupils. Parents fully and rightly endorse the school's 'family feel'. As one typical parent commented: 'St Sampson's is a lovely, friendly school which offers the security and nurturing environment that is essential to the first years of schooling'.

Most pupils reach the standards expected for their age, having got off to a good start in Reception. The school is aware that more of the able pupils should achieve Level 3 by the ends of Year 2 and that the progress of pupils with learning difficulties should be faster.

The school has a number of strengths. Pupils enjoy school very much and make good progress in their personal development. They behave well and work hard. They benefit from strong pastoral care and an ever-watchful eye for their welfare. The curriculum provides a good range of activities that engage the pupils. As the school knows, the next step is to ensure that pupils' progress in English and mathematics is linked more closely to them.

Leaders have a very clear view of the most important priorities, and have begun working on these in earnest. For example, they know that target setting and assessment procedures are a key priority for improvement.

They also recognise the need to improve the ways in which they monitor the school's performance. The school demonstrates a proficient capacity to improve.

Outcomes for learners

Pupils develop their basic skills proficiently and do especially well in using modern technology and in learning joined handwriting. Most pupils make the expected progress for their age across the school, and this is good in the Reception class. Progress is relatively less good for more able pupils and those with learning difficulties. The school is working to raise expectations of them and check their progress in a more systematic way.

Pupils enjoy school very much and behave well. The growth in their personal skills and qualities is a strength of the school. Pupils' confidence and the extent of their contributions to school and elsewhere develop well. Their progress as responsible citizens is good. The sense of community within the school is very impressive.

The quality of provision

Teaching and assessment are proficient. There are examples of good teaching across all year groups, and notably so in Reception. Lessons are generally well planned and make effective use of different resources, including modern technology. Relationships are good in all classrooms. In some lessons teachers are good at explaining what pupils should be learning but this is not clear enough in all of them. The school's improvement plan recognises the need to improve how well pupils' work is assessed, especially to help them to understand what they need to do to improve.

Teachers have worked hard to provide a curriculum that pupils find interesting, and this helps to explain the high levels of engagement found in most lessons. The curriculum covers all of the areas expected. It is enriched by a good range of activities outside the classroom, which have a strong influence on pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour. They help pupils to grow in confidence, show a sense of responsibility and demonstrate their well-developed ability to join in activities and work cooperatively. The school places an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' writing skills and is in the process of planning improvements in reading and mathematical problem solving. The school is aware that, in planning the topics that pupils find so engaging, they need to create stronger links with pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics.

The pastoral care of pupils is well developed and the school provides a nurturing environment. This makes a strong contribution to pupils feeling happy, secure and eager to attend school. Teachers are highly dedicated to the pupils, as is evident in the excellent relationships with pupils, and parents and carers.

Leaders are working in a focused and successful way to develop the target setting process, both for individual pupils and for the whole school. This has begun in earnest but is quite new in several respects. Academic guidance is proficient but could be made stronger through setting more demanding targets and monitoring pupil's progress more frequently.

Leadership and management

Parents and carers have great confidence in the work of the school. The headteacher is pivotal to this, as she leads in a calm and caring way that sets the tone for everybody. She is well supported by all other staff and the school has good links with parents and community partners.

Staff undertook a perceptive evaluation of their work that has led to priorities for improvement that are entirely endorsed by the validators. These priorities have been built into the school's improvement plan, which is giving impetus to raising standards, for example in writing, while preserving all that is good about the school. To sustain these recent improvements the school is well aware that it needs to increase the opportunities subject leaders have to manage their subjects, make fuller use of the database for monitoring pupil's progress and extend lesson monitoring to provide more support for teachers.

Main areas for school improvement

The validation endorses the school's areas for improvement and recommends that it takes the following actions:

- Make better use of assessment to improve pupils' learning to very best effect.
- Improve the process of self-evaluation to provide a firm evidence base of the quality of teaching and learning
- Develop the staff's skills and confidence in data analysis and individual target setting for individual pupils in literacy and numeracy
- Develop and consolidate the 'creative curriculum' so that there is tight planning for the progressive development of basic skills, especially to ensure that more pupils reach the higher Level 3.
- Allocate greater time to reading and mathematical problem solving