

SUMMARY OF THE JUNE 2005 VALIDATION REPORT

CASTEL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Castel Primary School is situated within the Castel parish. The catchment area stretches from Cobo Road to Richmond, and inland to Les Varendes.

There are 344 pupils on roll, 168 boys and 176 girls, aged from 4 to 11

They are taught by 16 teachers, including the headteacher, and 1 part time staff. There are 14 classes and a pupil teacher ratio of 20.6 : 1, with an average class size of 24.2.

Background

The validation team consisted of six inspectors. Five were Ofsted inspectors from the UK and one was an IFES trained headteacher from Jersey. The team met informally with the staff and toured the school accommodation on the Sunday before the validation and then spent four days inspecting the school. The school provided comprehensive documentation and its self review report in advance of the visit, having spent a year working on its self-evaluation activities. Additional information, such as children's work, videos and portfolios of other evidence, was scrutinised by the team during the week. Extra support for the school's review process was provided by the Education Officer Primary. All staff had attended the Education Department's IFES Internal Evaluator training course on how to carry out a self review.

The evidence base to validate the school's findings was collected through:

- scrutiny of a range of whole school and subject documentation, including School Improvement Plans since the last inspection, minutes of meetings and SATs results; information and evidence about standards and progress had been provided from the last three years;
- observation of 105 whole or part lessons;
- examination and discussion of teachers' planning;
- attendance at assemblies and some extra curricular activities;
- examination of pupils' current and previous work;
- approximately 18 hours of planned discussions with teachers and other staff, pupils and parents;
- observation of pupils on arrival and departure from the school and at other times around the buildings and grounds;
- scrutiny of 36 letters and 183 returns from the confidential parental questionnaire.

At the end of the week, subject leaders received an oral feedback on their areas of responsibility, and the team's main findings were reported to the headteacher and his deputy, and then to the Director of Education.

- Castel Primary continues to be a highly successful school in many areas of its work and provides a very good standard of education for its children.
- The school is exceptionally well led by an able, hard working and inspirational headteacher who receives excellent support from his strong senior management team, and from his committed staff and parents.
- There is a clear purpose and vision for the work of the school, expressed through the School Improvement Plan (SIP). It is at the forefront of a number of valuable educational initiatives, including those on accelerated learning, ICT, interactive whiteboards, assessment for learning and the development of subject and year group portfolios. They have yet to become firmly established in all classes across the school, but good progress is being made.
- The school's self-review was organised, led and documented in an exemplary manner. It has led to the production of an accurate and honest self-evaluation report. It will help the school to plan its future development with confidence and to ensure that the existing high standards are sustained.
- The focus on strengthened curriculum planning has contributed to the establishment of a curriculum that is well structured, cohesive, broad and balanced. Links between short, medium and long term planning are good.
- The school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum (Guernsey). In the Foundation Stage the curriculum is appropriately based on the Early learning Goals and incorporates elements of the literacy and numeracy strategies. Extra-curricular provision has been widened beyond the many sporting activities to include more clubs, residential experiences and outdoor, adventurous pursuits.
- The headteacher and his staff have successfully created a calm, caring and purposeful ethos within which children feel valued, supported and happy in their work and play. Standards of learning and behaviour are high. Children work collaboratively and purposefully, and enjoy displaying and talking about what they have done. School attendance is also high at around 98%.
- During the validation week, the external team observed 105 whole or part lessons. Of these, 98% were judged to be of at least a satisfactory standard, and a highly commendable 66% were either good or excellent. The head and his staff can justly feel proud of these achievements. They are an improvement on the already good results from the last inspection in 2000 when the figures were 94% and 43% respectively.
- Examples of good and effective teaching were observed in each of the key stages and in all subject areas. Teaching of a particularly high standard was observed in literacy, mathematics, history, geography, ICT, PE, choral singing, and during various initiative/problem solving activities.
- The detailed analysis of National Curriculum test results and the well planned teaching have led to significant gains in children's attainment in SATs at both key stages. There are no significant differences between the results for boys or girls.

A wide range of assessment strategies is now in place. Written reports for parents now contain clear statements about a pupil's attainment and progress for all subjects. learning objectives are shared with children at the beginning of lessons. Marking is

conscientiously carried out and portfolios of work make it easier to monitor curriculum continuity and progression. Effective use is being made of SIMS to record assessment and progress and to predict the rate of future learning. An updated marking policy is in preparation. The school rightly intends to ensure more consistency in the setting of homework.

- Teachers work hard to match activities and resources to children's different levels of ability, and generally good provision is made for children with special educational needs (SEN). The school is aware of the need to continue to differentiate work, particularly for the higher attainers, and to ensure that individual targets for children are sufficiently precise and measurable. The SENCO collaborates well with visiting specialists and the support services and is seeking to ensure that the new Guernsey Code of Practice for SEN becomes firmly embedded across the school.
- The school continues to make good provision for the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of its pupils, and it meets the statutory requirements for collective worship. Assemblies are well planned and enjoyed by the children. There are effective procedures for children's support, welfare and guidance.
- Relationships with parents and the local community continue to be a great strength of the school, as evidenced by the returns from the parental questionnaire (Appendix A). A 75% response rate was achieved, with 36 additional written comments. The analysis reveals widespread support and appreciation for the headteacher's leadership and management, and for the hard work of his staff. Well over 95% of respondents report that their child is making good progress, that the standards of behaviour, teaching and communication are good, expectations are high, and that the school promotes positive values and attitudes.
- A very supportive PTA regularly raises extra funds for the school. Many parents and other adult volunteers assist with in-school and extra-curricular activities. Children receive a positive introduction to school in the Foundation Stage. As a result of a well planned programme and good teaching, most children will have achieved the six Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year, particularly in personal, social and emotional development, mathematics and creative development. The school is aware of the need to enrich the outside play area to assist with learning.
- The school is very well documented and organised. Internal and external systems of communication are highly effective. Senior management and subject leader roles are clear, and the minutes of meetings at different levels reveal purposeful discussion and incisive decision making. Strong leadership and levels of support are provided in relevant areas by the deputy head, the two key stage co-ordinators and the subject leaders. The well organised monitoring systems will need to be continued after the validation. Many staff continue to update their skills through attendance at relevant in-service training courses. Subject leaders report particularly effective support from Island advisers in history, geography, art and PE. The school also benefits from the work of three committed teaching assistants. The school office is well run and administered, and provides a positive first point of contact for parents and visitors. The school is well cleaned and maintained, and staff work hard to overcome those continued deficiencies in accommodation which were highlighted in the previous inspection. Financial

systems are secure and the headteacher and secretary ensure a good oversight of spending. There are sufficient resources to meet the requirements of the NC(Guernsey).

- The school makes efficient use of its available accommodation, financial and staffing resources. The falling role is being managed well. Overall, this well managed, vibrant and successful school continues to provide very good value for money.

Key Issues that the School Needs to Address

The school's self-evaluation report has correctly identified a number of issues for attention and its recommendations are endorsed by the validation team. In particular, it is felt that the headteacher and his staff should focus on the need:

- to sustain existing high levels of motivational achievement;
- to ensure that new initiatives such as accelerated learning, ICT, interactive whiteboards, assessment for learning, the Guernsey SEN Code of Practice and the use of SIMS.net become firmly embedded across the school;
- to continue development of target setting and the consistent application of marking, homework and feedback through implementation of an agreed policy;
- to ensure that formal monitoring procedures continue to be practised effectively at senior management and subject leader levels in order to assess curriculum balance, the quality of teaching, workloads and the impact of whole school policies and initiatives;
- to extend the opportunities for high attainers and others through continued attention to the provision of appropriate targets, activities, resources and cross-curricular links;
- to further develop the school grounds and the outside area for reception children as additional resources for learning.

APPENDIX A

Castel Primary School

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out	244
Number of questionnaires returned	183
Percentage return rate	75

Percentages of responses in each category	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Nil Response
My child likes school	55	38	6	0.5	0.5	0
My child is making good progress in school	47	49	3	1	0	0.5
Behaviour in the school is good	39	56	3	0	1	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	26	45	20	5	3	0.5
The teaching is good	45	51	2	0	0.5	1.5
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	48	47	4	0.5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	40	51	7	0.5	0.5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school	63	34	2	0.5	0.5	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	24	34	3	0.5	36	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his best	55	42	2	0	1	0
The school is well led and managed	58	37	2	0.5	2	0.5
The school's values & attitudes are helping my child to become mature and responsible	54	44	1	0	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	17	42	20	4	16	3
The school works closely with parents	34	54	9	0	3	0