

15 June 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

**Le Murier School
States of Guernsey**

Recently, as you may know, my colleagues and I visited your child's school. During our visit, we talked to parents and students and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. We wanted to find out how well students are learning and achieving and how well the school supports students to do their best. The headteacher shared with us the school's successes and priorities for improvement. We were able to find out how good the school is at improving young people's education.

How well do young people learn and achieve?

The quality of learners' experiences is good in Le Murier School. Most young people say that they like coming to school and enjoy learning, especially on residential trips and outings. Almost all say that they feel safe and well cared for in school. In almost all lessons, young people are attentive and display good levels of concentration. In some classes young people have opportunities to support each other by working collaboratively in pairs and small groups. In the sensory and communication department, young people are able to move around the school independently and take responsibility for their own resources. Across the school, there is potential for young people to be more independent, to make more choices about their learning and to have a greater influence on learning. Planned activities and experiences beyond the classroom are a core part of young people's learning experiences. A few young people in each year group are contributing to the school's work through their roles on the Student Council. The majority of young people show that they understand their core skills targets. They can talk about how the targets help them improve and show a good understanding of what they need to do in order to achieve their targets.

The school recognises and celebrates the personal achievements of students at assemblies and by giving school certificates and awards. Young people gain confidence as a result of the positive relationships with staff and by taking part in the wide range of learning experiences both in classes and through outdoor learning. Young people have been successful in developing skills in sailing, swimming and other sports activities. Their notable achievements have been accredited by Duke of Edinburgh awards. However, the school does not provide sufficient opportunities for young people to gain external awards for their academic or wider achievements. Students demonstrate a sense of responsibility by raising money for charities. They have been successful in taking part in many work experience placements.

In literacy, the majority of students make or exceed the expected progress in talking, listening, reading and writing. They understand how to listen, when to talk and show respect to their peers and to staff. In the sensory and communication department, young people are building their communication skills using symbols and a variety of technological devices. In numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT), most young people make or exceed expected progress. Across the school, young people are developing well their understanding of money, number, time, shape, handling data and measurement. They can apply their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum. In ICT, young people are developing skills in using different computing devices. They can log on to the Internet using WiFi and use a range of general purpose software. In health and wellbeing, young people are aware of different aspects of healthy living and learning to make informed choices. They are learning to cook a wide range of healthy meals. Young people talk confidently about aspects of their learning in personal, social and health education (PSHE). The school is very successful in enabling students to move to college placements and gain qualifications in construction, engineering, catering and salon services.

How well does the school support young people to develop and learn?

The school has a clear rationale of preparing young people for life after school, by giving them the skills and experiences to prepare them for further education and work, and by giving them skills to live fulfilling lives as independently as possible. Not all stakeholders have a clear understanding of this rationale or how it is implemented in the life skills and work skills pathways. The curriculum policy statement specifies that there are collaborative learning opportunities with St Sampson's High School. However, these are not well developed. The bespoke curriculum is delivered through a series of topics and separate lessons in numeracy, literacy, ICT and PSHE. This approach to planning learning helps students to make connections between lessons but presents a challenge to staff to ensure that learning is progressive in each curriculum area and that the whole curriculum has appropriate breadth. The literacy, numeracy and ICT outcomes are defined in well-conceived, progressive frameworks. Through learning in class and beyond the classroom, the school aims to develop students' core skills. These outcomes are specified within the school's own skills framework. Some of these core skills are not clearly defined, have a limited range and lack rigour.

The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. In almost all classes, the learning climate is positive and staff create a calm, purposeful and supportive environment in which young people are happy and ready to learn. Staff use a range of teaching approaches well which results in enjoyable and motivating learning experiences. Worksheets are over used in a few lessons. Staff have a very good knowledge of young people's strengths and learning needs. They use this knowledge effectively to plan lessons and to respond to the needs of learners in the course of learning. In a few lessons, learning lacks challenge and teachers are not addressing fully the learning needs and abilities of all learners. In most lessons, learning is progressive and builds on previous activities. Teachers share lesson objectives with students but this is not consistent across the school.

Overall, staff meet the needs of most young people well. In the best examples, teachers encourage young people to take responsibility for their own learning, ask

challenging questions and provide helpful individual feedback so that young people are clearer about what is expected of them. In most lessons across all stages, teachers provide careful and well-considered support for learners with more complex needs through a wide range of communication aids such as symbols, pictures and ICT. The school and partner agencies ensure that the learning and health needs of young people are identified and appropriate plans are put in place to support them. All key partners are very keen to provide professional advice on the most appropriate targets for the young people whom they support and wish to move to a system where they set targets jointly with teachers. The school encourages parents and young people to take part in the regular reviews of progress and takes account of their views. Staff review targets regularly with key partners, young people and parents. There is scope for further involvement of key partner agencies and parents more directly in setting appropriate targets for young people with individualised education plans.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

Overall, school improvement through self-evaluation is satisfactory. The work of the school is monitored mainly by senior leaders visiting classes to observe lessons. These observations are not sufficiently rigorous and senior leaders do not spend enough time in each class to enable them to evaluate the impact of the observed teaching strategies on students' progress and attainment. Senior leaders should provide written feedback to teachers after discussing lessons. The school does not share its good practice well and few teachers take part in observing each other's lessons. The development of students' knowledge and skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT is monitored well by senior and middle leaders. The school could more fully involve young people, parents and the school's partners in evaluating the quality of its provision. The self-evaluation activities have helped the school to improve its practice. Senior leaders produce a school improvement plan each year and this has helped the school to focus on important strategic priorities. The plan has an appropriate number of strategic targets and detailed action plans for each target.

Leadership across the school is satisfactory. The headteacher has been very successful in building team work and a positive ethos in the school. There is now a well embedded and very positive culture of collegiality and teamwork across the school. The headteacher is innovative and with the cooperation of staff has developed the unique curriculum at Le Murier School. He models good classroom practice. The school has demonstrated a capacity to evolve at a steady pace. Senior leaders should now provide more challenge for staff to stimulate further developments and build on the strong collegiate ethos. Staff should be encouraged to develop as reflective and enquiring practitioners who are able to act as critical friends to one another. The school should seek new approaches to curriculum development, assessment and accreditation to further its improvement. Staff should consider creative ways of working together with St Sampson's for the benefit of staff and young people in both schools. Overall, senior leaders need to spend more time on strategic leadership issues.

This validation visit found the following key strengths.

- The caring and welcoming ethos of the school where staff and young people feel valued.
- The teamwork among all school staff and their contributions to improving the learning experiences of young people.
- The confident and courteous young people who engaged well in lessons.
- The development of many young people's personal and social skills through their participation in outdoor education and the Duke of Edinburgh award.
- Transition from Key Stage 2 to 3 and Key Stage 4 to 5.

We discussed with staff and the Education Department how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Review the core skills framework to make them more progressive, coherent and rigorous.
- Improve the curriculum by providing greater breadth at each stage and by ensuring that there is a progressive development of knowledge and skills in each curriculum area.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by making explicit the learning objectives and skills being developed in each lesson.
- Provide a wider range of qualifications to accredit young people for their academic achievements and their personal and social development.
- Develop further the social and academic integration of its young people with their peers in St Sampson's High School.
- Improve the rigour of self-evaluation and involve young people, parents and the school's partners in evaluating the quality its provision.

Here are the evaluations for Le Murier School.

Improvements in performance	satisfactory
Learners' experiences	good
Teaching for effective learning	good
Meeting learning needs	good
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory
Leadership of improvement and change	satisfactory

What happens at the end of the validation visit?

We are satisfied with the overall quality of provision. We are confident that the school's self-evaluation processes are leading to improvements. As a result, we will make no further visits in connection with this visit. As part of its arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of education, the Education Department will inform parents about the school's progress.

Terry Carr
HM Inspector

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Appendix 1

<p>Excellent</p> <p>6</p>	<p>Outstanding or sector leading An evaluation of excellent applies to provision which is sector leading. Pupils' experiences and achievements are of a very high quality. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the school. It implies that very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.</p>
<p>Very Good</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Major strengths An evaluation of very good applies to provision characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish pupils' experiences. Whilst an evaluation of very good represents a high standard of provision, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to make provision without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the school will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.</p>
<p>Good</p> <p>4</p>	<p>Important strengths with areas for improvement An evaluation of good applies to provision characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of good represents a standard of provision in which the strengths have a significantly positive impact. However, the quality of pupils' experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the school should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, but take action to address the areas for improvement.</p>
<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Strengths just outweigh weaknesses An evaluation of satisfactory applies to provision characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of satisfactory indicates that pupils have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on pupils' experiences. However, while the weaknesses are not important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of pupils' experiences. It implies that the school should take action to address areas of weakness by building on its strengths.</p>
<p>Weak</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Important weaknesses An evaluation of weak applies to provision which has some strengths, but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of weak may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strength, important weaknesses will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish pupils' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the school.</p>
<p>Unsatisfactory</p> <p>1</p>	<p>An evaluation of unsatisfactory applies when there are major weaknesses in provision requiring immediate remedial action. Pupils' experiences are at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for provision evaluated as unsatisfactory will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the school.</p>