

Review of Primary Education in Guernsey

Undertaken by

Denis Mulkerrin CBE MA

March 2012

“The most important person in any school is the pupil. The most important asset is the teacher”

“The education of the child is not for the school alone”

Review of Primary Education in Guernsey

Introduction

This review sets out the findings and recommendations of a Review commissioned by the Guernsey Education Board with the following terms of reference.

The review shall examine:

1. Analysis of attainment and progress in literacy and numeracy across the primary phase.
2.
 - a. Analysis of comparable statistics between Bailiwick schools in these areas.
 - b. Analysis of comparable statistics with relevant other jurisdictions in these areas.
- 3-6 Do findings in the secondary review in areas 3 - 6 apply equally to primary schools or is there any difference in approach required? For example, on further delegation of powers and responsibilities to schools?
3. The effectiveness of school performance setting and assessment, as implemented between the Education Department and island schools.
4. The effectiveness of independent evaluation in respect of island schools.
5. The actual or potential effect on education outcomes of specific issues, as may be identified by the review.
6. The processes and policies surrounding public dissemination of key education performance indicators.
7. The effectiveness of transition between the pre-school, primary and secondary phases.

The reviewer shall report to the Education Board no later than 31st March 2012.

Methodology

The review was publicised online on the Education Department website.

- 64 people were seen by the reviewer with most discussions lasting over an hour. These have included:
 - Two Guernsey States Ministers
 - Three other States Deputies
 - Education Department officers and former officers
 - Headteachers, senior staff and individual teachers
 - Teaching Assistants
 - Parents
 - Various members of Guernsey businesses
- Between two and four visits to the primary schools to observe the teaching of literacy and numeracy, and to speak with staff and pupils.
- Documentation:
 - Education Board minutes
 - School Validation (Inspection) Reports
 - Numerous education and school policies

I would like to thank Trevor Grayland, a highly respected former Guernsey Primary Headteacher, and Tim Tatham, a former Surrey Primary Headteacher and data expert for their superb help with this report.

Introduction

I have found it a rewarding experience visiting the primary schools, talking with Headteachers, observing teaching, chatting with staff and, very importantly, listening to the views of children. In particular, I have seen a lot of happy smiling faces. Morale is high in Guernsey's primary schools.

What has impressed me most has been the committed and caring approach of staff and the attitude of the children. It is clear that the staff really care deeply for the children and know them extremely well as individuals. The children in turn respond to this very well. They show respect for their teachers and engage well in lessons. I have seen virtually no discipline problems; rather, I have seen children who work well and enjoy everything that their school has to offer.

Section 1 and 2

Analysis of attainment and progress in literacy and numeracy across the primary phase.

- a. **Analysis of comparable statistics between Bailiwick schools in these areas.**
- b. **Analysis of comparable statistics with relevant other jurisdictions in these areas.**

Outline of the assessment system

In primary schools in Guernsey, pupils follow a curriculum similar to the national curriculum in England. Pupils are assessed at the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1) in Year 2 when they are aged 6 / 7. They are again assessed at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) in Year 6 at the age of 10 / 11.

At KS1, assessments are in English, maths and science. This is done by the teacher and is known as “Teacher Assessment” which is the broad term to describe activities, tests and observations carried out by teachers on a day to day basis. Teacher Assessment grades are then moderated to ensure consistency. There is no externally marked test. This method of teacher assessment is also employed in England at KS1.

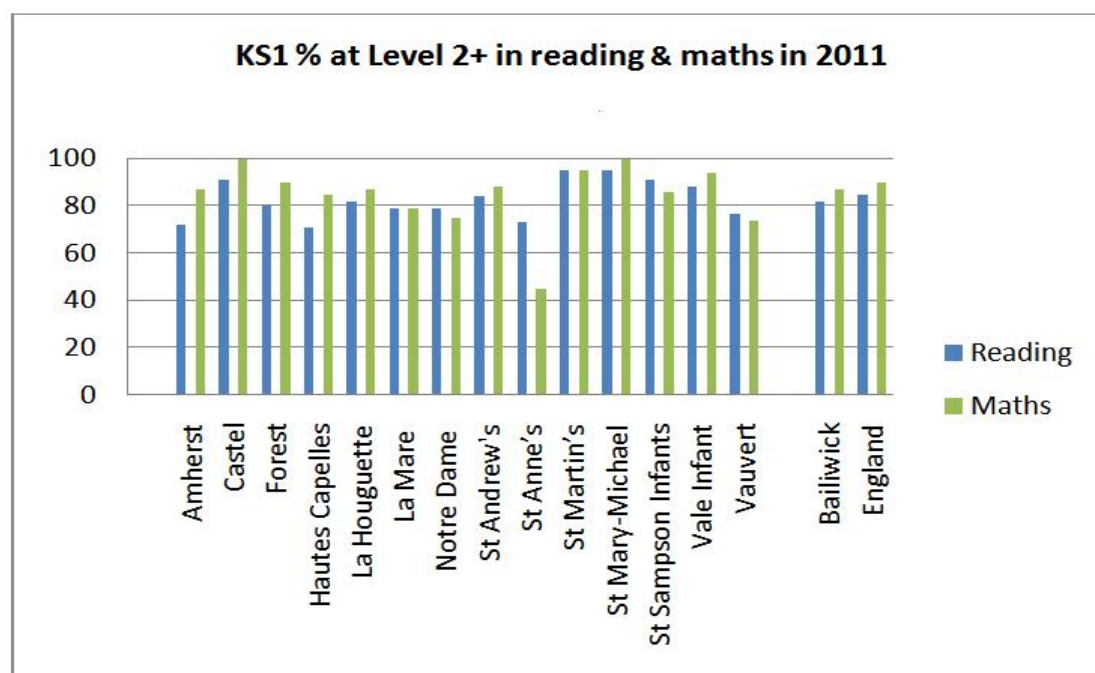
At the end of KS1, Level 2 is the standard most children are expected to achieve. The more able child is expected to achieve Level 3.

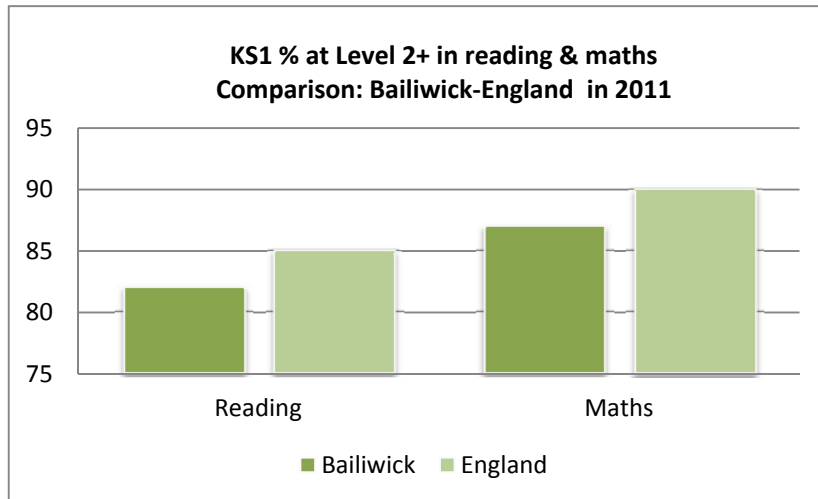
At KS2 in Guernsey, assessments are undertaken in English, maths and science, and are again done by moderated Teacher Assessment. This is totally different to England where assessment is done by written tests known as “Standard Assessment Tests” (Sats). These are marked externally, i.e. they are not assessed by the teacher. Guernsey used to do Sats but moved away from them six years ago.

At the end of KS2, Level 4 is the standard most children are expected to achieve. The more able child is expected to achieve Level 5.

In 2011, the percentage of children at the end of KS1 achieving Level 2+ in Reading and in Maths was:

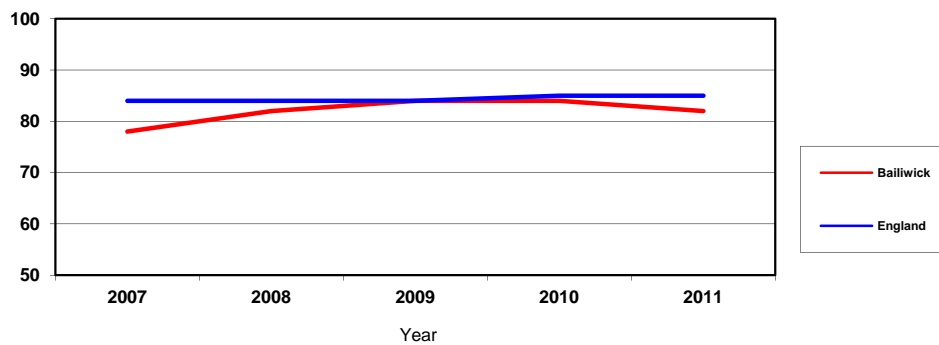
School	Reading	Maths
Amherst	72	87
Castel	91	100
Forest	80	90
Hautes Capelles	71	85
La Houquette	82	87
La Mare	79	79
Notre Dame	79	75
St Andrew's	84	88
St Anne's	73	45
St Martin's	95	95
St Mary-Michael	95	100
St Sampson Infants	91	86
Vale Infant	88	94
Vauvert	77	74
Bailiwick	82	87
England	85	90



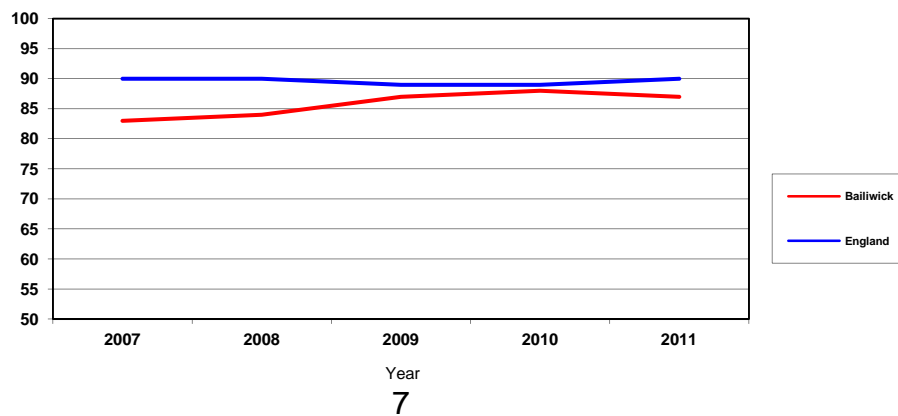


**National Curriculum Averages
2007 to 2011
End of Key Stage 1, Level 2+**

Reading

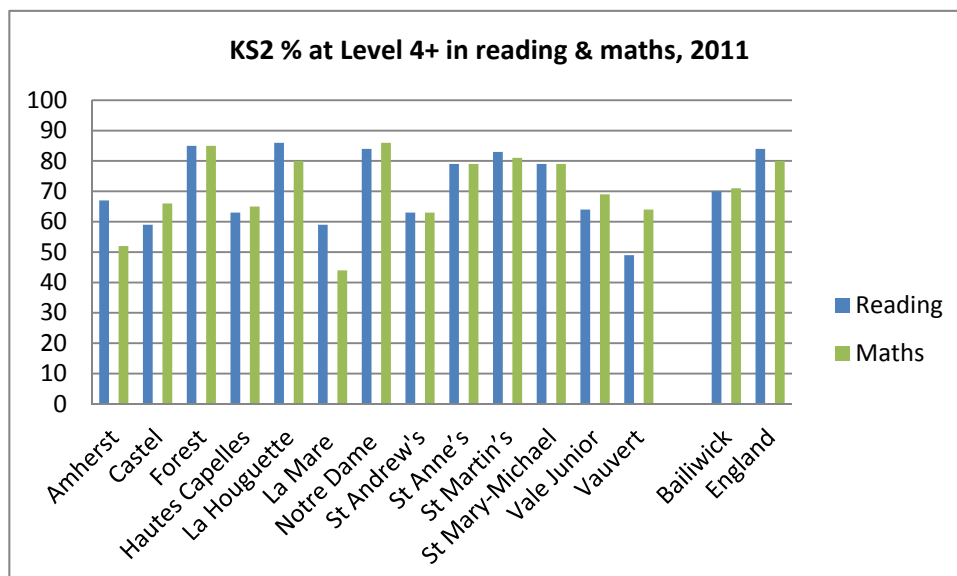


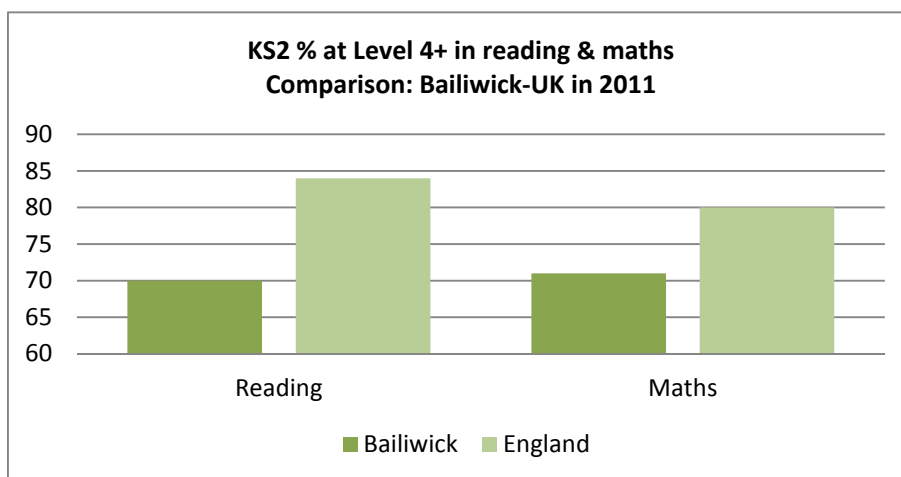
Maths



In 2011, the percentage of children at the end of KS2 achieving Level 4+ in Reading and in Maths was:

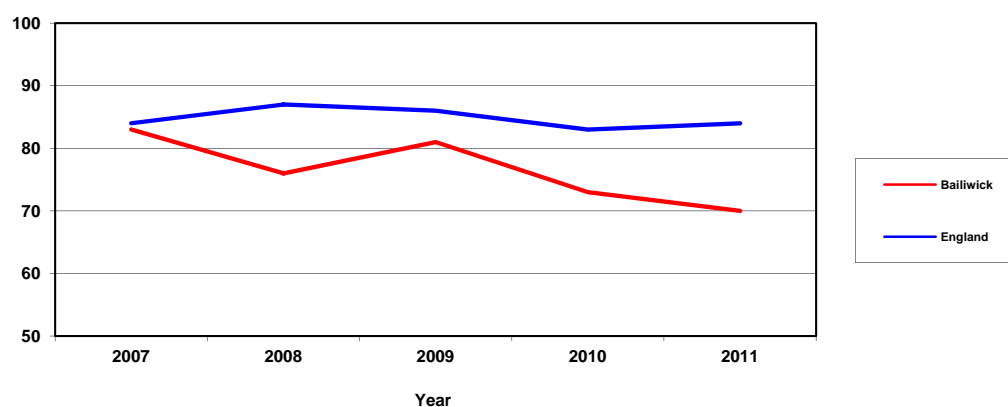
School	Reading	Maths
Amherst	67	52
Castel	59	66
Forest	85	85
Hautes Capelles	63	65
La Houquette	86	80
La Mare	59	44
Notre Dame	84	86
St Andrew's	63	63
St Anne's	79	79
St Martin's	83	81
St Mary-Michael	79	79
Vale Junior	64	69
Vauvert	49	64
Bailiwick	70	71
England	84	80



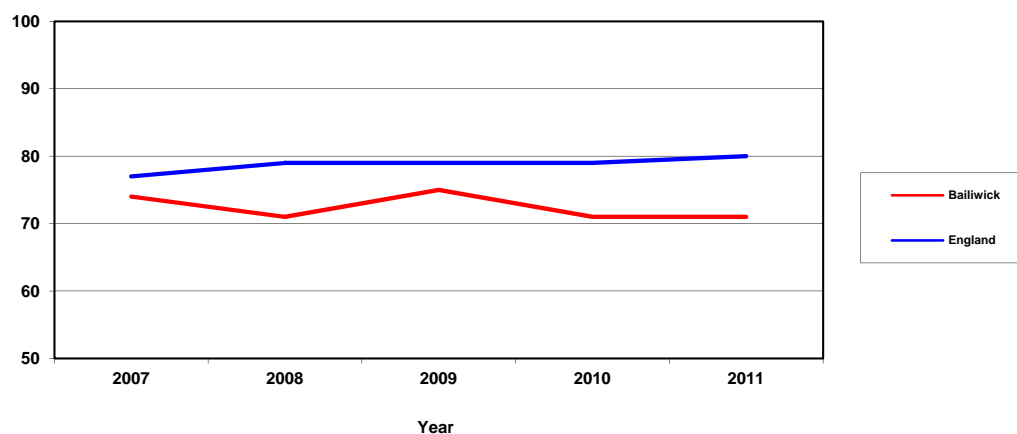


**National Curriculum Averages
2007-2011
End of Key Stage 2, Level 4+**

Reading



Maths



It must be emphasised that this data shows “raw” results and, as such, does not take any account of the nature of the intake of the individual schools. Even though Guernsey is a small island, the intakes of schools vary a great deal:

- Some schools are in areas of higher social deprivation than others.
- The percentage of children on the Special Education Needs register in individual schools ranges from 10% up to 32%.
- The number of pupils in the cohort - very small cohorts can give extremely misleading results.

For these reasons, it is more valuable to track the progress that children make from when they start at primary school through to Year 6. The very recent introduction of the Hertfordshire Assessment Manager 7 data system will enable schools to track progress infinitely better and, eventually, to add a ‘value added’ factor. This will ensure a far more accurate comparison between school and school.

11+ Examination

It has been suggested that the results of the 11+ examination could be used to compare primary schools. This would be quite unfair:

- The 11+ examination involves verbal and non-verbal tests which are not part of the Guernsey school curriculum.
- A significant number of children have coaching by paid tutors to help them prepare for the 11+ examination. Such tutoring is outside the control of schools.
- It would be wrong to compare schools on the basis of 11+ results given the variable intakes in the island.

What the data tells us about literacy and numeracy across the Bailiwick.

- The Bailiwick averages for the end of KS1 at Level 2+ are generally consistent with the national average in England.
- Several island schools are above the national average in England.
- At Level 2+ in KS1, the Bailiwick averages have steadily improved since 2007 until the slight dip in 2011.

- Over the five year period from 2007 to 2011, the highest attaining Guernsey schools are on a par with national averages in England at KS1, and KS2.
- At KS2 there is a particularly worrying decline in reading levels from 2009. This decline is more marked with boys than with girls.
- Further data shows that standards at Level 3+ at KS1, and Level 5+ at KS2 (these are the levels which very able children are expected to achieve) are significantly below the national standards in England.

NB. The Lead Validator for the island has referred several times in reports to the lack of challenge for able pupils in some schools.

Comparisons with other jurisdictions

In terms of comparisons, there is a tendency for Guernsey to compare itself with either Jersey or England. In Education, the reality is that England has been slipping down the international education league tables for a number of years. The leading country for education in Europe is Finland. Further afield it is places such as South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Because Guernsey replaced the national Key Stage 2 Sats with teacher assessment six years ago, comparisons with other jurisdictions is extremely difficult, if not impossible. If you take England for example:

- The KS2 Sats taken in England are a 'snap shot' in time of a pupil's attainment. The Guernsey teacher assessment system shows what a pupil can do consistently, independently and in a range of contexts over an extended period of time. If done rigorously, teacher assessments are more accurate about what a pupil's real attainment is, but research in the UK show that teacher assessments give lower grades than KS2 Tests. To compare the outcomes of teacher assessments and KS2 Sats is like trying to compare apples and pears.
- In England some of the independent prep schools take part in the national tests and their figures are included in the overall figures. In Guernsey, the primary sections of the three independent schools do not take part. For the 2011 Year 6 cohort this represented 14% of the pupil population. This means that around 85 children from fee paying schools are not included in the data.

Clearly, it would be desirable to know how standards in primary schools compare with other areas, but in order to do this Guernsey would have to revert back to doing Sats.

However Sats are controversial:

- In 2010, over 4,000 primary schools in England boycotted Sats. The main reason was that tests were seen to be 'drilling' children at the expense of giving them a rounded education.
- It is argued that Sats were introduced not for educational reasons, but for the production of data to compare schools and to put them into league tables.
- Sats are less accurate than teacher assessment in measuring pupil achievement.
- Sats only exist in England. They were abolished in Wales and Northern Ireland and were never used in Scotland.

Because of the 2010 boycott, a review of Sats was led by Lord Bew in 2011 which resulted in the controversial writing test being scrapped and replaced with teacher assessment.

Although teacher assessment provides a more accurate picture of how a child is performing, there are certainly problems with it in Guernsey:

- A *huge* amount of time is spent by teachers assessing and grading. Possibly too much time is spent, as it saps energy that could perhaps be better used in concentrating on teaching and learning in the classroom.
- The system has to rely on a shared understanding between all teachers in all schools of what constitutes an individual level. This is very difficult.
- The credibility of assessments demands real rigour in the moderation process. This can take up a lot of teacher time and is expensive.
- Several Headteachers are worried that moderation in the island is becoming too cumbersome. They use the expression "*We are in danger of weighing the pig, rather than feeding it!*"

If Guernsey were to move back to taking, for example, the English Sat, there are advantages:

- It would be externally marked and so free teachers from the time consuming teacher assessment and moderation process.

- Would end the perception of inaccuracy of teacher assessments and the moderation system.
- Grades could be higher than the current teacher assessment grades.
- Guernsey would have a definite benchmark to compare standards with England

But there are also disadvantages:

- As Guernsey is not technically part of the UK, the Education Department would need to pay for the marking of these tests. However the cost is likely to be compensated by savings on moderation.
- There could be “teaching to the test”; children can learn to “pass Sats” without being a “good reader” or a “good mathematician”
- Some Headteachers / teachers might see it as a backward step.

Recommendations

- Teacher Assessment should be made more consistent across the island.
- To improve reading at KS2 and particularly for boys
- To increase the number of able children achieving Levels 3+ and 5+
- To consider moving back to the Reading Sat so that Guernsey has a definite benchmark to compare itself with

Section 3

The effectiveness of school performance setting and assessment, as implemented between the Education Department and Island Schools

The effectiveness of school performance setting and assessment in the primary schools is good. Part of this is due to a restructuring in November 2011 leading to the creation of the post of “School Improvement Manager” with a greater focus on targeting intervention at schools needing more support.

In addition, a further Education Officer has recently been appointed for the primary schools. (Historically there had only been one Education Officer monitoring the 15 primary / infant schools). This additional person, appointed from the UK, is an outstanding specialist in the use of data, an area in which Guernsey education has been grossly deficient.

All primary schools track the progress of children in English and maths at regular intervals against the National Curriculum levels. For many years in Guernsey, this information has been recorded on a computer database called SIMS (School Information Management System). However, in modern terms, SIMS is not user-friendly. To use the system requires a specialist level of knowledge (which varies across the island), a high level of interrogation skills, and tedious number crunching. Basically, it is technology which is slow and not easy to use. For this reason it is being supplemented currently with an additional SIMS module adapted by Hertfordshire known as the Hertfordshire Assessment Manager 7 reporting system.

The implementation of this new system has been welcomed by Headteachers and staff. It will allow them to analyse their data accurately in order to measure both standards and progress. In particular, Headteachers now see data as a key driver in raising standards of teaching and learning. The speed with which the data can be manipulated, and the user-friendly formats of the reports, will enable Headteachers and staff to identify more easily the progress of pupils as a year group, of individual classes, and of individual pupils. Specifically, at the touch of a button, it will also be able to compare the attainment and progress over time of specific groups, such as SEN (special educational needs) pupils, high flyers, etc. In addition, the schools will now be able to measure the impact of any intervention programmes, for example, additional focused reading sessions for children struggling with literacy skills, or the Springboard maths programme. The bonus of all this is that, as the Hertfordshire reports are drawn from the existing Guernsey SIMs data base, there is no additional data entry required by schools.

Most importantly with this new system, it will allow schools, for the first time, to establish a clear “base line” from which to measure the progress of pupils. This means that it will be possible to compare schools as to how effective they are in improving the progress and attainment of pupils. It also means that, for

the first time, Guernsey will be able to develop a “value added” coefficient on the lines of UK schools, i.e. the value that a school has added to a child’s starting position. Given the various intakes of schools - for example, the spread of ability of children starting at La Houquette and Amherst Schools is very different - it is essential to be able to do this.

Headteacher Performance Management

The annual Headteacher Performance Management (HTPM) needs more rigour. One highly respected Headteacher told me:

“I found HTPM to be less useful and it added little value to my leadership of the school”

Another Headteacher said:

“Performance management in Guernsey is the management of paperwork, not people”

These views were echoed by virtually all the Headteachers with whom I spoke.

Currently, there are three meetings per year relating to HTPM but the key one is a meeting in October with an assigned appraiser from a UK-based company, Education Advisory Services (EAS). Typically, the appraisers are more senior or retired Headteachers from the UK, and are also experienced “School Improvement Officers” (SIPs)

The people involved in HTPM in schools in England are SIPs representing the Local Education Authority, and Chairman of Governors. The SIP is usually an Ofsted Lead Inspector and will be a data expert. The Chairman of Governors will know the school context, and also be aware of the view of parents and the local community. They will look at a variety of issues such as pupil attainment and progress, exam results, discipline / exclusion figures, attendance and so on. If there has been a recent Ofsted Inspection of the school, the findings of the report will be the main focus. The outcome will be the setting of targets for the Headteacher, but targets with real rigour and accountability.

There is no reason why Guernsey could not move to this model. For example, the role of the SIP could be taken by the present School Improvement Manager, who has impressive knowledge of data, as well as, in my opinion, the rigour required. If Guernsey moves to setting up governing bodies, the chairman could also be involved. In the meanwhile the role could, perhaps, be taken by a retired Guernsey Headteacher who has a proven track record of success.

Recommendation

The Headteacher Performance Management policy to be updated and made more challenging.

Section 4

The effectiveness of independent evaluation in place in respect of island schools

The process of school inspection in Guernsey is known as Validated Schools Self-Evaluation (VSSE). Schools are validated by inspectors from Tribal, which is the largest provider of inspections for the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England. All the inspectors are Ofsted trained and have extensive experience of inspecting schools both in the UK and around the world. As such, they have undoubted authority and are highly respected by Headteachers in the island. Most Headteachers felt happy with the effectiveness of the inspection process. There is nothing I wish to add to what I said in the review of secondary schools, other than the following.

Guernsey used to have a six year cycle of school inspections. This has recently been changed to a four year cycle. In England, Ofsted had a similar cycle but this “one size fits all” system has been changed radically in recent years. If a school achieves an outstanding inspection report (only about 9% do), Ofsted will not re-visit unless data such as examination results show a serious dip. Instead, Ofsted now focus their resources on those schools which are under-achieving, doing follow-up inspections if felt to be necessary. It is a wiser use of limited resources and gets better results. Guernsey should consider doing the same.

The Lead Validator (Inspector) for the island schools is a key person in assessing the quality of education in Guernsey. He is involved in the validations of most primary and secondary schools and assessing the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation. As an HMI and vastly experienced Ofsted Lead Inspector, he is in a unique position to judge the effectiveness of individual schools, the quality of education in Guernsey, and to give advice on how to raise standards. In particular, coming from the UK, he is able to give a wholly independent view. As such it is sensible that he should meet periodically with the Chief Officer of the Education Department. This would enable him to highlight specific points in his reports, and to talk about issues that he might not wish to commit to paper.

Recommendation

- The VSSE process should focus more on the schools that require additional support and guidance.
- That there are regular meetings between the Chief Officer of the Education Department and the Lead Validator for VSSE.

Section 5

The actual or potential effect on education outcomes of specific issues, as may be identified by the review

5.1 The education of the child is not for the school alone

For learning to be really effective, parents must take an active role in their child's education - the education of the child is not for the school alone. A parent reading with their child is vital. Research shows that this is the single most important thing parents can do to help their child's education. It is best to read little and often, and parents need to put time aside every day for this. Also, school expectations with regard to good behaviour and respect for others need to be reinforced at home as well as at school.

Where parents do not read with their child, the school has to take over their role. Doing this on a one-to-one basis is very labour intensive and, therefore, very expensive. This is an area where adult volunteers can be very helpful. A highly respected former Headteacher, who led a Guernsey primary school for over twenty years, tells me he used volunteers extensively; some were retired people happy to help for a couple of mornings a week, others were PTA members or friends of the school. These people would work in corridors around the school reading with children. It was very effective in improving literacy skills.

At Vauvert School, there is a team of over 30 volunteers, all of whom have had training by the school in reading to children. The new Headteacher of Vale Junior School is setting up a similar system. At Amherst Primary the Headteacher has 25 volunteers signed up to help. In addition, she has a successful partnership with KPMG and Investec Bank whose employees assist with reading. Investec also support the Amherst lunchtime cookery club, football, netball and cricket as well as attending the residential trip to Lihou Island.

However, the use of volunteers varies greatly across the schools. I would recommend a more island-wide approach to increase the use, and training of volunteers in the primary sector. Guernsey is a fantastic, 'giving' community. The number of people in the island working as volunteers with charities, in youth clubs and organisations such as the Guernsey Sports Commission would be the envy of any area in the UK.

An excellent new charity "Every Child Our Future" has recently been established in Guernsey to forge a partnership between education, business and the community. The aim is to assist children develop their literacy and numeracy skills. It will operate under a structured framework whereby trained teachers and / or professionals will work on a one to one basis with children most in need of support. In addition there will be an employee volunteer

scheme whereby trained volunteers will read with a child in a structured way. Businesses in the island have already committed to provide both financial resources and encourage employees to volunteer for the scheme. In addition, further volunteers will be sought via the charity website.

Reading to children for a couple of hours a week is something that many adults could do - with much satisfaction and enjoyment. With an island-wide approach, and keeping bureaucracy to a minimum, hundreds of adults could be involved. The beneficiaries would be the young children of the island.

Recommendation

Develop an island wide strategy to increase, and train, the number of volunteers willing to help children with reading in the primary schools.

5.2 Pre-School Education

With its relative prosperity, it is surprising that Guernsey does not have universal pre-school education. Guernsey is alone in the UK in not having this. All other UK jurisdictions provide 12 to 20 hours a week in a pre-school setting.

The value of pre-school education is universally acknowledged. For example, the Northern Ireland Preventative Spending Report says “Studies indicate that for every £1 spent on early years education, you must spend £7 to have the same impact in adolescence”. The Effective Provision of Pre-school Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE3 -14) study in England has also shown that the effects of pre-school education can still be apparent at age 14, leaving children up to a year ahead of those who have not had the same experience.

In 2011 the Education Board made plans to put the case for nursery / pre-school education to the States. The provisional estimate for this was £1.7 million. Given the present financial climate, I am told that this may not be possible in the immediate future. However, in my opinion, there is a moral case for paying for pre-school education for certain children in the island.

Children starting at primary schools in Guernsey do not start from an equal position. The majority have parents who read to them from an early age. Many of these children also benefit from attending pre-school, the fees for which are paid by their parents. However, there is a minority of children who have none of these benefits, whose parents in the main do not read to them, or send them to pre-school. As such, these children are at a major disadvantage compared to their peers. As they progress through education they are likely fall further and further behind, fail at GCSE, and become tomorrow's NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

Using the combined knowledge of staff in schools, social services and health visitors it should not be difficult to identify such children. Once identified, a voucher system could be used to enable them to access pre-school education with one of the commercial providers. The voucher would then be redeemed by the States. The cost of this would be a fraction of the £1.7 million mentioned above, but the long term benefits, for both the children and the island, would be huge.

Recommendation

The States provides free Pre-School Education for targeted children via a voucher system.

5.3 Literacy

Given the over-whelming importance of literacy, the decline in KS2 Reading results since 2009 is a concern. It will be a serious concern should this continue in 2012.

For many years, Guernsey has used the Suffolk reading age tests in Years 2, 3 and 5. However, because it was thought that they were too narrow a measure of reading skills, they became optional around two years ago. It is interesting however, that the schools with the best VSSE reports continue to still use these tests as a check on progress.

In my lesson observations I have seen better maths lessons than English lessons. The Year 5 and 6 maths lessons in particular have offered more challenge with less teaching to the middle. It was also clear that the pupils were enjoying themselves because of the instant feedback they were getting.

I have, however, been extremely impressed with the excellent focused reading groups I have seen in several schools. These additional sessions (sometimes taken during assembly times) are aimed at pupils struggling with basic literacy. The groups are small and the teaching is intensely focused. I would strongly advocate more of this.

Some children need more literacy help than others. Consider the last rite of adolescence - passing the driving test. A very small number of people will pass after a mere ten lessons with a qualified driving instructor. The majority of people will pass after around 20 lessons. Others need 30, 40, or more lessons. But in the end, most people do eventually pass the driving test. The same applies to other skills in life - learning to swim is a classic example.

Learning to read or write is not quite the same but there are similarities. Some children simply need more practice. However, it should not be “more of the same”; children tend to switch off if this happens. Research indicates it is the *quality* of the experience that counts in improving literacy and engendering a love of books - especially for boys. This is why focused reading groups are so essential. With a good teacher they are hugely effective in improving literacy.

Recommendation

Schools should extend the practice of focused reading groups, especially for those boys who struggle with literacy.

5.4 Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistants (TAs) are a valuable resource in primary education. Their role is to help the classroom teacher, for example, by:

- Listening to children read and reading to them.
- Supporting children with specific individual needs such as learning difficulties.
- Working one-to-one or in small groups.

In Guernsey, there is a need to rationalise how Teaching Assistants are allocated to schools. At the moment, each reception class is allocated a TA, plus an additional TA for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This produces anomalies. For example, in one school with 275 children there is only one Teaching Assistant; yet in an infant school with 66 children there are two Teaching Assistants.

The formula for allocating Teaching Assistants should be based on need, and to an extent, school size. Schools with significant numbers of socially deprived children, children with learning difficulties and / or challenging behaviour need more Teaching Assistants to help them than other schools. I understand that plans are in hand for this to happen.

There is a noticeable inconsistency in the way Teaching Assistants are utilised across the island schools. Research in the UK shows that if TAs are not directly targetted at the children’s learning, and don’t receive full support from teaching staff, they become ineffective.

I would recommend that, following discussions with the relevant parties, the Guernsey policy regarding Teaching Assistants be updated. In addition to revising the formula for distributing Teaching Assistants across the island schools, this policy should include:

- The role of the Teaching Assistant and how he/she can be used to directly target learning in the classroom.
- Training for teachers on how to use Teaching Assistants more effectively.
- Consistency of approach and recognition by teachers in schools.
- Opportunities for Teaching Assistants to be involved in planning.
- The inclusion of Teaching Assistants in in-service training with the teaching staff and access to literacy and numeracy courses.
- Further training opportunities for Teaching Assistants beyond their basic course to enhance their skills and acquire additional qualifications.

Recommendation

- The policy of allocating Teaching Assistants to be changed to reflect pupil need and school size.
- The policy on the role of Teaching Assistants to be updated.

5.5 Falling Rolls

Because of the falling birth rate in the island, Guernsey has more school places than children to fill them. The education term for this is “falling rolls”.

As birth rates move up and down, over time falling rolls (or sometimes rising rolls) hit most areas in the UK. Occasionally, schools have to be closed as it is uneconomical to keep them open - the teaching cost per pupil becomes unacceptably high. The argument comes down to cost efficiency versus community benefit. When schools are threatened with closure, emotions run high; parents are naturally protective of their child's school. Guernsey is no exception. In 1985 the Education Department considered closing the Forest Primary School but was thwarted by a strong parental campaign. Since then, the school has been upgraded and remains a flourishing one-form entry school. In 2008, St Andrew's and St Sampson's Infant School were under threat of closure, but again and in the end, it did not happen. Because of its small size and community spirit, Guernsey is much more susceptible to “parent power” than other areas in the UK.

I understand that there are 800 empty places in the island's primary schools, a figure based on pupil / teacher ratios. This is quite different to the way school rolls are calculated in England and some Headteachers dispute the 800 figure. However, if it were 500, it would have implications for school closures, and, indeed, the building of the new La Mare de Carteret High School.

In a falling roll situation, the schools which are most vulnerable are the small ones. The normal reason for closing small primary schools is financial. However, education cannot be solely about efficiency. It must also be about quality. As one parent said to me:

“The battery farm approach may have the accountants purring, but if the end result is a poorer education, it is a false economy”

Small schools can also suffer from a narrow curriculum. However, this does not mean that attainment is necessarily lower than larger schools. In 1999, a UK Government study revealed that three times as many small schools achieved 100% pass rates than larger schools. In 2007, Ofsted noted that this proportion had increased.

In the UK, by far the biggest financial gain for a local authority in closing a school is selling the school site to a developer. In Guernsey this is not always possible as a number of schools are owned by their parish.

Other issues include:

- Closing a primary school can take the heart out of the local community.
- There are costs relating to staff redeployment.
- There are costs at the receiving schools (such as portacabins).
- The effect on local house prices when the school closes.
- The costs of extra bus transfers / additional cars and environment.
- Closing schools would require the review of catchment areas and would impact on all the other schools.

A key issue, of course, is an unexpected rise in the birth rate or unexpected migration into the area. Unless the school is “mothballed”, it can prove far more difficult to build a new than to close one.

The Guernsey Education Department has to find savings of £1.6 million. With a falling roll situation, it is to be expected that the Department will consider the closure of some primary schools to make financial efficiencies.

If this happens there are fundamental issues which have to be paramount:

- *The interests of the children must be the first consideration in any school closure. Children only go to school once.*
- *If there is a compelling reason to close a school, it has to over-ride the undoubted harm this could do to children and the local community - and it needs to be explained to islanders.*
- *The success of any closure will be measured by the subsequent effect on the outcomes which children and young people achieve.*

5.6 Local Management of Schools

The view of the merits of LMS varies across the primary schools. Headteachers of the larger schools, and those who have experienced LMS in the UK, are very positive. Headteachers who have not experienced LMS are more wary. This is understandable: in the late 1980s, UK Headteachers were wary when LMS was first proposed.

There is an emerging consensus that the delegation of the following areas would be beneficial to Guernsey primary schools:

- **Training Budget**

Headteachers are critical of many of the centrally held courses as not being relevant to the needs of their school. However, given that these are free and that supply cover (at £220 a day) is automatic, Headteachers feel obliged to allow their teachers to attend. There is a need for some courses being held centrally; for example, those covering new statutory regulations, and areas relevant to all schools such as literacy and numeracy. However, the specific needs of individual schools are different. If most of the Training Budget were to be delegated, Headteachers could tailor training specifically to the needs of their school. The result would be better professional development and infinitely better use of resources.

- **Teaching Assistants**

If the funding for Teaching Assistants were delegated to schools, Headteachers could make decisions relevant to the needs of their school. In some schools, because of the nature of the intake, there is a need for more Teaching Assistants.

- **Supply Budget**

Guernsey spends £1.3 million annually on supply cover. In 2011 one primary school spent £56,000 - the Headteacher informed me that this was three times the amount she had spent in her previous school in the UK. The reason why the supply budget is so high is simple: the money is held at the centre and is therefore something of a bottomless pit for schools. If some of this money were delegated to schools, Headteachers would spend it much more carefully - as they definitely do in the UK. When it's "your money", as opposed to "their money", people tend to spend it in a totally different way. It would also mean fewer teachers being out of school which would be better for the children.

Recommendation

The Supply Budget, Training Budget and Teaching Assistant Budgets to be delegated to primary schools.

5.7 Improving schools - The professional development of staff

Ofsted, and indeed all research, says that the most important issues in improving schools are:

- *Improving the quality of the leadership. This is not just about the leadership of the Headteacher. It is also about the quality of leadership of middle managers such as heads of department.*
- *Improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are the most important asset in the school.*

In terms of importance, all other areas in the school are peripheral. If you get the above right, you will have a good school. If you don't get it right, at best, you end up with an under-achieving school. At worst, a failing school.

The starting point is the recruitment process. By far the most important single thing that a Headteacher does is to appoint good teachers. In Guernsey this is hampered by over-centralization and bureaucracy. In my review of secondary education, I said that the process by which UK teachers are recruited in Guernsey is not fit for purpose. The recruitment process has improved - but only at the margins. For example, interview panels are now able to see references prior to interviewing. But the recruitment process for teachers and support staff still takes too long and Headteachers across the island are frustrated by unacceptable delays. The "pool system" of appointing primary teachers is also heavily criticized. The present Guernsey recruitment system is much too focused on process. It should be focused on outcomes, i.e. appointing high quality teachers.

Once you have recruited the staff, it is then about developing them. In schools this is termed Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Good schools, almost by definition, have good CPD systems. For example, when you appoint a newly qualified teacher (NQT) from university, that teacher is not, in any way, the finished article. In the first year of teaching there will be a major CPD input focusing on lesson observations. But CPD should not finish at the end of the first year of teaching; it should be embedded in the school and is for all staff including Headteachers, deputy heads, middle managers and support staff such as teacher assistants. In my opinion, there is a very variable approach to CPD across the island's schools. In some schools it is good - in others, less so.

I am intrigued by the practice in Guernsey of frequently turning to the UK for expertise and consultants. From my visits to schools, I am certain that there is talent and expertise in the island that could be used to equally good effect.

For example, at La Mare de Carteret Primary, I observed an outstanding maths teacher. The challenge and pace of the lesson, along with the total involvement of the pupils, was inspirational. Many local authorities in England now use excellent teachers like this to help coach and mentor teachers in other schools. Part of this is done via lesson observations, followed by tips and advice. The major part is the excellent teacher taking the lesson to show how it can be done! Experience shows this "teachers teaching teachers" approach, because it is classroom based, is highly effective.

The Lead Validator for the island says in his 2011 Report:

"The quality of subject leadership was found to be very variable"

There is a real need for more CPD at middle management level. This CPD should not be just about the needs of the school, but also about the needs of the island. Today's middle managers in schools can be tomorrow's Deputy Heads and Headteachers. But this is only likely to happen if CPD is focused on developing the skills of leadership, in particular people management.

Teachers who have attended the island leadership courses have told me that they are excellent. But there is a need to compliment such courses with good leadership practice in schools. For example, as part of professional development, a teacher might be asked to take on a small whole school project under the guidance of a deputy-head. What is developmental about this that the "trainee manager" usually learns (sometimes the hard way) that lasting change in a school is through people, rather than systems. Managing paper is easy - it doesn't answer back.

At headship level some local authorities have "Mentor Headteachers" which can work well. In Guernsey there are some primary Headteachers who would make excellent mentors. Also for Headteachers, one of the best forms of

CPD (and pinching good ideas) is seeing good practice in other schools. In most areas of England, there is a very informal (and very private) network of school visits by headteachers - but never to the school down the road!

Recommendations

- There should be a much stronger emphasis on professional development in all schools.
- There should be more mentoring / coaching by the best teachers.

5.8 Dealing with Under-Performance

Within education in Guernsey there is a definite culture of ignoring under-performance. This is happening at all levels, both in schools and in the Education Department. Poor staff are regularly side-lined rather than dealt with and there is a marked reluctance to move to competency procedures. In schools, failing teachers are hugely damaging. If they are allowed to remain in post they end up failing generations of children. Most adults have memories of incompetent teachers - and the damage they can do. It is also damaging for school morale. The vast majority of teachers are hardworking, professional and totally committed to the children. These teachers know too well colleagues who are not delivering, and are totally exasperated when “management” ignores it.

Where the performance of a teacher is poor, it should never be ignored as being too difficult to resolve. It is the job of the Headteacher to improve the teacher and there are a number of recognised and appropriate ways of doing this. The starting point is to try and improve performance via increased support and targeted CPD.

If, after everything possible has been done to improve the teacher, a teacher is still below the expected standards, other solutions have to be explored. One is to persuade the person that they are in the wrong profession; this works surprisingly often. If this fails, capability procedures have to be considered. No one likes doing this and the process can be long and torturous - but it has to be done. However, in Guernsey, this happens extremely rarely. There is also a corrosive blame culture. The Education Department blames the Headteachers for not dealing with under-performance. The Headteachers blame the Education Department for not supporting them. This nettle has to be grasped.

Recommendations

- Capability procedures in Guernsey need to be updated.
- Headteachers need to apply these procedures, wherever necessary.
- The Education Department needs to support its Headteachers.

5.9 Catholic Schools

Guernsey has two Roman Catholic primary schools: Notre Dame du Rosaire and St Mary & St Michael. Under the 1970 Guernsey Education Law, the capital funding for these is different to the other island schools. The two schools have to find their own finance for building repairs, replacement of old boilers, painting and decorating, etc. All other schools have these areas funded by the Education Department.

In practice, the Education Department pay an annual “rent” for the school buildings as they are owned by the Catholic Church. There is no mention of this rent in the Guernsey Education Law and it is thought that the paying of it dates back to the 1940s. Today, the rent is seen as a contribution to building maintenance.

In 2011, the rent paid to Notre Dame was £22,183. Yet, over the last two years, the school has had to find £162,000 for capital projects such as a new roof on a building, resurfacing of a playground and refurbishment of children’s toilets. Given that the annual rent does not cover these costs, the school has no choice but to find the difference. In order to do this, Notre Dame has a building fund to which parents are invited to contribute (the suggested amount is £100 a year), plus contributions from the parish. St Mary & St Michael Primary School has a similar arrangement.

In England, church schools of all denominations receive 90% funding for capital works. The notion of parents making contributions to building repairs for their child’s school, on top of their normal state taxes, disappeared decades ago. It was seen as discriminatory and a tax on religion.

I understand that the 1970 Guernsey Education Law is to be updated. I would argue that this update should contain financial provision for capital funding, repairs and maintenance of the two Catholic Schools, similar to the arrangements in England.

Recommendation

The updated Guernsey Education Law should provide financial provision for capital funding, repairs and maintenance of the island’s Catholic Schools, similar to the arrangements in England.

5.10 The length of the 11+ exam process

The 11+ examination process in Guernsey is too long. It starts in October with two practice papers, followed by seven full papers, and finishes in February. The papers are then marked in the island and parents are informed of the results in May. Parents and teachers have told me that this is far too long. The 11+ examination process dominates the life of most Year 6 pupils, has a negative effect on classroom teaching and learning, and in some cases causes unnecessary stress.

I believe that the reason for multiple papers is that it alleviates the problem of the pupil who may not be feeling well, who under-performs on the day of a single examination. As Guernsey has an excellent system of scrutinising the ability and potential of “border-line” pupils who have just missed passing the 11+, this should not be necessary.

The few areas of the UK who still undertake selection at 11+, for example Northern Ireland, now use two or three papers. I would recommend that Guernsey changes to this format, allowing the whole examination process to be much shorter. This would reduce the current stress on pupils and parents, and, importantly, enable pupils to concentrate more on their normal work in the classroom. Further, rather than every primary school being involved with all the administration and invigilation required, it may also be better for the 11+ examinations to be taken at one central venue, for example the Grammar School, on a Saturday. This is certainly the norm in the UK.

An added benefit is that the whole process would be less expensive and bureaucratic.

Recommendations

- The present 11+ examination format be changed to two or three papers
- The examinations to be taken at a central venue such as the Grammar School on a Saturday morning

Section 6

The processes and policies surrounding public dissemination of key education performance indicators

In order to increase accountability, the Education Board decided in January 2012 to start to publish individual school examination results and inspection reports. The publication of this data has been the norm in the UK for some twenty years and the resulting increased accountability has driven up standards.

However, given that the full inspection reports will now be read by potentially thousands of Guernsey people, the way that they are written will need to change. In the past, the Guernsey validation reports have been seen only by a tiny select audience, virtually all education professionals. As such, they are written in “education-speak”, wholly unintelligible to most people outside the world of education. In the UK this was a problem in the early days of Ofsted. Surveys showed, for example, that many parents simply could not understand the jargon and technical language. As a result Ofsted changed the report.

- Reports were shortened; down from 20 to around 10 pages (the present Guernsey reports are far too long).
- No jargon or technical language.
- Every section has a grade number to make it clear to the reader how good that particular area of the school is:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

- A one page summary of the inspection judgments based on the above four grades. If a person had insufficient time to read the whole report, this page told them precisely what the strengths and weaknesses of the school were.
- A one page summary written exclusively for the pupils of the school to find out how their school did in the inspection. Given that the most important people in the school are the pupils, this was an excellent innovation.

Recommendation

The VSSE (inspection) Reports should change to the Ofsted-style format in order that they can become more easily understood by a wider audience.

Section 7

To examine the effectiveness of transition between the pre-school, primary and secondary phases

Pre-school education in Guernsey is privately run.

- There are nineteen pre-schools and eight day nurseries. In addition there are three pre-schools which receive grants from Social Security or are charity funded.
- Two staff in each must have a relevant NVQ Level 3 qualification.
- Typical costs per child are:

Pre-school	£3.70 to £5.60 an hour
Nurseries	£6.00 an hour
Subsidised pre-school	£2.00 per morning

HSSD is responsible for monitoring pre-schools, all of which have an annual inspection and two unannounced visits. This includes health & safety checks on the building premises, and CRB checks on staff.

As they are privately run, the pre-schools are not inspected by the Education Department.

The current transition arrangements to primary schools vary a great deal. The representative body is the Pre-School Alliance.

Pre-School Alliance views:

- The Pre-School Alliance is of the opinion that the schools vary in their commitment to engage with the pre-school staff, with some schools not visiting at all.
- It values the training courses offered by the Primary Education Officers. (The staff take-up for these courses is a very impressive 94%).
- It would like closer contact with the Education Department.

Primary School views:

- Primary schools value the work done by the Alliance and express frustration at not being able to visit all the pre-schools.
- They indicate that the quality of the experiences within pre-school settings vary enormously.
- They all offer a parental programme of visits with the children and an evening meeting for parents.
- They affirm that there is no island-wide policy for ensuring an ordered transition.

Finance permitting, Guernsey would benefit from moving to universal access for all children for 15 hours a week in term time.

Recommendations

- A uniform policy on transition should be adopted. This to include an agreed standardised profile for all children transferring to the Reception Year in the primary schools.
- In collaboration with HSSD, closer relationships with the Education Department and pre-schools should be established.

Primary to Secondary Transition

There is a great variation in the transition procedures between primary and secondary schools. Pastoral links on the whole are good. Issues involving individual children regarding attitude, discipline, and any specific concerns are passed on well. Curriculum links are less good. SIMS data is transferred to the secondary schools, but this is not necessarily trusted by some Headteachers and re-testing takes place in the first term.

All research shows that the transition procedures from primary to secondary are of real importance to the successful performance of the child. Some children are potentially vulnerable at times of transition.

The “*What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary School*” by EPPSE highlighted five aspects of a successful transition:

- Developing new friendships and improving self-esteem and confidence.
- Settling so well into school life that they cause no concerns to their parents.
- Showing an increasing interest in school and school work.
- Getting used to their new routines and school organisation with great ease.
- Having curriculum continuity.

I noticed in my visits to secondary schools that having to repeat topics covered at primary level was a grumble with pupils - the Six Wives of Henry VIII being a specific one!

Children who felt they had a lot of help to settle in were more likely to have a successful transition. This included help with getting to know their way around the school, visits to schools, induction and taster days.

Continuity in the curriculum and progression in learning are long standing weaknesses of the education system in the UK. Partner primary and secondary schools are shown to have little knowledge of their respective practices in assessing, recording progress and setting targets. The 2002 Ofsted report on transition said that the pastoral side is about right, but that secondary schools are not doing enough to build on what pupils have achieved in English and maths in the final year of primary school. The EPPSE study said that interviews revealed that secondary schools do not appear to “trust” the data on children provided by primary schools, and this leads to a system of baseline re-testing of all children in Year 7.

The “East Sussex Student Voice Questionnaire” is a particularly useful tool in finding out from Year 7 pupils how transition can be improved, and this has helped to improve the pupil experience in East Sussex. The Guernsey School Improvement Officer has extensive experience of this system which could be adopted usefully in Guernsey.

Recommendations

- The School Improvement Manager to give an introduction to Headteachers of the East Sussex self-review system.
- A working party to be formed to agree a uniform transfer system, based on good practice.

Executive Summary

- I have been very impressed with the committed and caring approach of staff in the primary schools and the attitude of children. Children on the whole work well and enjoy being at school. They show respect for their teachers, engage well in lessons, and I have seen virtually no discipline problems. Rather, I have seen many happy smiling faces. Morale is high in the island primary schools.
- The intakes of the island primary schools vary a great deal and therefore the comparison of outcomes in terms of literacy and numeracy results have to be treated with caution. A new modern data system will shortly be able to give more information about outcomes based on the progress that children make from when they start at primary school.
- Analysis of comparable statistics between Bailiwick schools and other jurisdictions is very difficult as the teacher assessment system used in the island is different to other areas
- If you compare Guernsey with England, the island results for 7 year - olds (Key Stage 1) are very similar to England. For 11 year-olds (Key Stage 2) English and Maths assessment results are below England. However, individually, the highest attaining schools are on a par with England. Since 2009, at Key Stage 2, there has been a worrying decline in reading results, especially for boys. Results for “able pupils” are significantly behind England.
- The effectiveness of school performance setting and assessment is good, but Headteacher Performance Management needs more rigour and challenge.
- The VSSE (Inspection) process should focus more on schools that need additional support. The VSSE reports should be written so that they can be more easily understood by people outside education.
- Given the over-whelming importance of literacy, schools should extend the practice of focused reading groups. This could be complimented by the development of an island wide strategy to increase the number of volunteers willing to help children with reading in the primary schools.
- The majority of primary school children have benefitted from pre-school education paid for by parents. Those who have not attended pre-school start at a serious disadvantage, and many fall further behind as they progress through the education system. There is a strong moral and financial argument for the States to provide free pre-school education via a voucher system to help these children.

- Because of the falling birth rate there are around 800 surplus school places in the island. This has implications for possible school closures and even the building of the new La Mare de Carteret High School.
- The policy on the allocation and role of Teaching Assistants needs updating.
- Primary schools could benefit from the delegation to them of the budgets for staff training, Teaching Assistants and cover teachers.
- The financial provision for capital funding, repairs and maintenance of the two island Catholic Schools should be updated on lines similar to England.
- There should be a much stronger focus on the professional development of staff.
- Within education in the island there is a definite culture of ignoring under-performance. Capability procedures need to be updated, and where necessary, implemented by Headteachers, and supported by the Education Department.
- The 11+ Exam process is far too long. The present seven exam papers should be reduced to two or three, with the exams being taken at a central venue such as the Grammar School on a Saturday.
- There needs to be a more uniform policy for the transition of children from the commercial Pre-School Education establishments to primary schools. From primary to secondary school, pastoral links are good. Curriculum links need improving.

There is much potential and good will in the primary schools and I am very optimistic for their future.

Denis Mulkerrin CBE MA
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