



Jersey Schools Review Framework – Independent Report of Grands Vaux Primary School

Les Grands Vaux
St Saviour
Jersey
JE2 7NZ

Headteacher: Maria McCool
Review date: 28-30 March 2023

Summary

The respectful relationships between pupils and staff are a strength of Grands Vaux so that pupils approach learning with positive attitudes. The warm and genuine welcome pupils receive at the start of each day is reflected in all classrooms so that the school provides an inclusive and friendly environment. Pupils respond well to the support and guidance staff provide, they work hard, feel safe and are valued as individuals. Parents report that, in addition, the school develops their child's independence well and encourages their child to get on with others.

Senior leaders have developed a close and supportive staff team committed to placing the children in their care at the centre of their work. Staff are proud to be members of this school. The headteacher, recently described by parents and members of the community as a 'pillar of strength', sets the tone and continues to move the school forwards with considerable drive and determination. She is ably supported by a dynamic deputy headteacher and several knowledgeable and enthusiastic middle and subject leaders.

Leaders have made a series of changes to planning and the curriculum that are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Developments in the way that teachers plan and implement units of work are helping to build pupils' writing skills. A new approach to the teaching of phonics is being implemented well by staff so that pupils are rapidly developing their early reading skills.

Effective professional development is supporting improvements. Staff across the school have been trained to respond swiftly and sensitively to pupils' needs, this has had a notable impact on promoting pupils' social and emotional skills. Staff training and coaching are helping to develop pupils' progress in mathematics so that an increasing proportion of pupils are working securely at expected levels. Children in the early years classes are making better progress in developing their understanding of number.

Leaders recognise the need to continue to raise pupils' achievement and to ensure that an increasing proportion of pupils across the school reach age-related expectations. However, in light of the school's success, leaders should now also focus on increasing the proportions of pupils working at higher standards.

Full report

Achievement

- Pupils' rates of progress in writing are improving due to better planning and the implementation of well-sequenced writing activities. Pupils across the school improve their writing through editing, redrafting and regularly writing at length in a range of genres. As a result, more pupils are reaching expected standards in writing. The majority of pupils produce neat well-presented writing, but leaders recognise the importance of developing standards of presentation and transcription further.
- Gaps remain in pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills, particularly in the fluency with which they complete calculations. However, the school's new initiatives are making a positive difference to pupils' achievement in mathematics. Staff training is helping to ensure pupils develop their understanding of number facts and calculation. For example, staff training has ensured that children in Nursery and Reception are improving their understanding of number and are increasingly confident to make estimates.
- Recently, better phonics teaching has boosted pupils' early reading skills. Younger pupils can approach unfamiliar words using their newly acquired segmenting and blending skills. A series of reading interventions provide effective additional support so that more Key Stage 1 pupils reach the standards expected for their age.
- Pupils read with obvious enjoyment and become enthusiastic readers. Those with lower prior attainment are given opportunities to read regularly to an adult. Story time sessions for children in Nursery and Reception bring the book to life, with children enthusiastically joining in by demonstrating how they would walk on a tight rope.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in physical education sessions run by specialist staff. In line with the school's inclusive approach, all pupils, including those with particular physical needs, participate enthusiastically and energetically in lessons. Pupils enjoy developing their physical stamina and mobility.
- Pupils show a developing understanding of scientific enquiry and disciplinary knowledge. For example, Year 1 pupils increase their understanding of the five senses through engaging and stimulating investigations and Year 3 pupils make predictions and investigate the relative strength of different magnets.
- Across the school, increasing proportions of pupils eligible for Jersey Premium (JP) reach expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The most recent data shows that the proportion of this group achieving expected standards compares favorably with Jersey averages. This is a notable improvement on previous results.
- Developments in provision are helping pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make better progress, particularly in their social and emotional development. For example, in early years children are supported well to develop their listening skills and show increasing levels of concentration and attention. Staff have received relevant training in specific interventions and closely monitor pupils' progress. A range of effective interventions are raising standards for pupils with SEND across the school.
- Better teaching and curriculum planning are raising pupils' achievement. Lessons are more clearly sequenced to build on pupils' previous learning and develop their knowledge and skills. However, some gaps in pupils' understanding and knowledge remain, so that raising pupils' achievement is still a key priority. Moving forward, the challenge for the school's leaders is to maintain the current rate of improvement so that a greater proportion of pupils go on to reach expected and higher standards.

Behaviour, personal development and welfare

- The inclusive and welcoming nature of the school is very apparent from the start of the school day and in the way that pupils engage with each other in a friendly manner. Reception children are warmly welcomed by staff and helped to register their attendance at the start of the day. Similarly, during breakfast club, pupils of all different ages play cooperatively, helping to create a relaxed welcoming atmosphere in the care and consideration they show for each other.
- Staff consistently implement the school's behaviour policy. Reviewers noted how staff quickly and sensitively 'scoop' pupils into their care so that pupils are helped to refocus on the task and continue their learning. Pupils understand and respond to the high expectations required of them, those pupils with social and emotional needs are supported effectively so that any disruptions in lessons are minimised.
- Pupils are increasingly encouraged to speak aloud to explain their ideas and thoughts to others and to give their views in discussions. Strategies to develop pupils speaking and listening skills encourage equal representation from all class members and are developing pupils' levels of communication well.
- Pupils show mature and thoughtful attitudes in lessons and in their responses to each other. In personal, social and health education, Year 6 pupils provided carefully considered responses in discussions on inclusivity and body image. In Religious Education, Year 5 pupils demonstrated thoughtful understanding of forgiveness as they studied Easter Sunday. School Council members are respectful of each other's points of view and are articulate in talking about children's rights. In the words of one pupil representing many other pupils at the school, 'when you are kind it feels better than being rude.'
- Pupils show a well-developed appreciation of the natural world in which they live. They are involved in local community projects such as maintaining cliff paths and caring for the environment. Young children make trips to local woods and pupils clearly enjoy their regular opportunities to complete Forest School activities in the school's outdoor areas.
- The school offers a range of trips, visits and visitors that bring a breadth of experiences to the school's curriculum. A visiting artist prompts pupils to apply different artistic techniques in their work. Pupils develop their understanding of the digestive system by exploring a temporary science installation in the school hall.
- Stories and cultural beliefs from a range of European countries are celebrated, enhancing pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Pupils' art on display depicts the study of a range of cultural styles and techniques, from African quilt making to Mayan inspired print making. 'All about us' displays around the school celebrate pupils' different cultures, backgrounds, favourite foods and hobbies. Pupils enjoy opportunities to learn about a Romanian 'martisor' made from spring flowers.
- Pupils show a high regard for how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are articulate and enthusiastic about their learning of e-safety and recall in detail the knowledge and skills that they had been taught in school to keep themselves safe online. Pupils know what to do if they have a concern about themselves or another child and can name many adults in the school that they would be confident to share any concerns with.
- Across the school, pupils respond well to the warm praise and frequent encouragement they receive. Pupils feel valued and listened to, confident that friends and staff will help them and make sure everyone is included.

Effectiveness of teaching

- Respectful relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school's provision. Pupils feel supported and cared for by adults so they are confident to contribute their thoughts and ideas in learning about complex concepts. Reviewers noted how teachers regularly ask pupils types of questions that challenge them to explain their ideas and thinking to others and to consider their responses.
- Teachers move around the classroom well in lessons enabling them to quickly identify and address misconceptions. Teachers regularly make effective use of ongoing assessment to provide additional support and to adapt teaching strategies to develop pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants are deployed purposefully to support small groups of pupils. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils were encouraged to assess their understanding of a key mathematical concept, information that was used effectively by the teacher to ensure they were provided with additional support in subsequent lessons.
- Particular strengths in teaching are apparent when pupils are clear about the activity and the criteria of successful learning. Support staff in these classes understand the learning objectives and successfully replicate the teacher strategies. Here teaching assistants use questioning techniques well to develop pupils' understanding of key concepts.
- Teachers regularly refer to pupils' previous learning and explain how pupils will apply this knowledge in their new learning. Pupils can make links with their previous work and draw on key knowledge and concepts to build their understanding. For example, in a well sequenced mathematics lesson, Year 2 pupils were encouraged to recall 2 dimensional shapes in developing their understanding about the characteristics of irregular and regular polygons. Senior and subject leaders have accurately identified the need to further develop pupils' fluency in problem solving and mathematical reasoning.
- Teachers are adept at using information technology to reinforce key learning points and to capture pupils' responses in a way that boosts enjoyment and engagement. On occasion, some information presented on interactive whiteboards is too small and more difficult for pupils to read, particularly for those pupils new to English.
- Teaching strategies are used effectively to develop pupils' early reading. In well-paced sessions, teachers quickly recap previous learning of letters and sounds and then move on to develop pupils' correct articulation of unfamiliar phonemes. Reception children benefit from consistent routines that develop their understanding; with children adept at using actions to sound out individual phonemes in a word.
- Staff in Nursery and Reception work closely as a team, collaborating well to ensure children play, explore and learn together well. Adults interact playfully with children, listening carefully to their ideas and interests and helping children to develop their speaking and listening skills. On occasion, whole class activities miss opportunities to develop children's independence and to extend children's learning.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching and teacher's subject knowledge are helping to increase pupils' progress. The school is well placed to ensure that teachers continue to provide increasing levels of challenge and support so that a greater proportion of pupils reach expected and higher standards.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

- The headteacher has shown considerable drive and determination in moving the school forwards. She is strongly committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming school

community and leads by example. Together with senior and middle leaders, the headteacher has developed a clear vision and common values that place children's well-being and safety at the epicentre of the school's priorities.

- At a recent meeting attended by parents and members of the community many of those present voiced their view that the headteacher was a pillar of strength in responding to the recent flooding of the school and local area.
- Senior leaders have developed a close and supportive school community where staff work closely to share planning and practice. Staff report their pride in being part of such a supportive team and are quick to provide help and encouragement to each other.
- Within a short space of time, the newly appointed deputy headteacher has developed the school's use of assessment information, introducing a more rigorous tracking of pupils' achievement. Meetings with staff to discuss pupils' progress are now providing a greater focus on the progress of the key groups of pupils, such as those eligible for JP, those with SEND and multilingual learners. The subject leader of mathematics describes how the recent pupil progress meetings were better informed because of the more precise tracking of the attainment of individual pupils.
- Senior leaders access and provide development and training which are closely aligned with the priorities set out in the school's development plan. This plan contains a range of initiatives which at first sight appear numerous. However, the quality of training, coaching and support allied with improvements in the quality of teaching, have helped to ensure that many of these actions are having a clear and notable impact across the school. As a result, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has improved. Whilst leaders acknowledge the need to further raise pupils' achievement, the school's planned actions are appropriate and are making a positive difference.
- Leaders have overseen strong developments in the promotion of support and provision for pupils with SEND. Across the school pupils with SEND are increasingly provided with activities closely matched to their needs. Effective staff training has ensured swift and thoughtful responses from staff that meet pupils' needs. Staff make effective use of a range of strategies to reduce pupils' anxiety and help them re-engage with learning.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the current picture of the cohort profile and needs of children in early years. Strong team relationships benefit the staff and children. Relevant staff training and coaching have helped to ensure children are increasingly confident in their communication and language and their understanding of numbers. Leaders are working to provide additional resources and small group activities that fully challenge children to reach higher levels of attainment.
- Leaders have organised a phased approach to the monitoring of core and foundation subjects across the academic year. This phased approach helps to ensure that in a small school, monitoring responsibilities are spread across the year and workload is carefully managed. Senior, phase and subject leaders should continue to monitor lessons and work in books against medium term planning to ensure work is well-sequenced and that planned actions are raising the achievement of all groups of children and pupils.
- Leaders are strongly committed to maintaining pupils' welfare and act quickly to minimise risk of harm. Reporting demonstrates that all members of staff are aware of the procedures to share and record concerns. Leaders of safeguarding carry out their roles rigorously and, in conjunction with the SENCo, work in close partnership to share concerns and agree procedures. There are regular updates for staff through the weekly briefings and ongoing training ensures that child protection remains a high priority.
- Leadership have raised awareness of the need to develop the school's perimeter fencing with the Jersey government. They eagerly await resolution.

Recommendations

The school should take the following actions

1. Continue to improve pupils' achievement in reading, mathematics and writing by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils in Key Stage 1 reaching expected standards in their phonological development
 - increasing the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards
 - embedding strategies to develop pupils' fluency of calculation and recall of number facts
 - continuing to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical problem solving and reasoning skills.
2. Ensure monitoring by senior, phase and subject leaders:
 - regularly reviews and refines the approach to develop writing so that planning continues to set out clear sequences of learning
 - evaluates the impact of improvement actions on raising pupils' fluency in mathematics
 - provides activities that fully challenge children in early years to reach higher levels of attainment.

Information about the school

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll: 142

Headteacher: Maria McCool

School telephone number: 01534 735808

School website: www.grandsvaux.sch.je

Contextual information

- Grands Vaux Primary School has one class in each year group and a Nursery.
- Around a half of all pupils in 2022 were eligible for Jersey Premium. This is higher than the average for all Jersey primary schools.
- Around 40% all pupils have a home language other than English. Around one third of the school's population speak Portuguese as their home language.
- In the academic year 2021/22, the proportion of pupils identified as pupils with special educational needs support is broadly twice that of Jersey primary schools.

Information about the review

- Reviewers visited lessons (or parts of lessons) across all year groups.
- A sample of pupils' work in English and mathematics was considered.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils about their views of school life and the way the school ensures their safety and wellbeing.
- A small sample of pupils read to reviewers and discussed their reading.
- Pupils were observed during break times and as they moved around the school.
- A tour was made of the school's site to check its security and safety.
- Extended discussions were held with school leaders at various levels.
- The school's published assessment information and data were analysed and taken into account.
- A wide range of documents were considered.
- The review considered the results of surveys of parents and staff.

The review team

Led by an experienced off-island school adviser/inspector, there were a total of 4 reviewers in the team.

Enquiries about this report should be addressed to Head School Improvement & Advisory Service, Children, Young People, Education and Skills, Highlands Campus, PO Box 142, St Saviour, Jersey JE4 8QJ.