



Jersey Schools Review Framework – Independent Report of Haute Vallée School

La Grande Route de Mont à l'Abbé
St Helier
Jersey
JE2 3HA

Headteacher: Mr Stuart Hughes
Review date: 10-12 October 2023

Summary

This well led and governed school gives very valuable service to its pupils and the community. The school has been transformed, with very considerable improvement in recent years. Pupils are proud to attend. They feel safe and secure. One said simply, 'It's a great school!' Most leave with a useful set of qualifications, and an appropriate place in further education.

The large majority of parents are very pleased. One commented for many: 'This school is fantastic. I would recommend it to anyone.' Another added, 'The school does a great job.'

Pupils' behaviour is calm, kind, and productive. They are very willing to help each other in lessons, and work things out together, which helps their learning. Staff have positive relationships with the pupils. Together with their typically clear, engaging, and inclusive teaching, this makes for effective learning across the subjects.

Pupils' attendance is in line with other Jersey schools. Occasional misbehaviour by a few pupils leads to a higher exclusion rate than leaders would like. The school is correct to continue its positive work to improve these two areas.

Senior leaders show great moral purpose and commitment. They listen to the pupils carefully. Their leadership works. They agree nevertheless that further improvements will require a differently focused style of leadership.

Until now, the clear leadership from the headteacher and senior leaders has often come in well considered broad brush strokes. The strategic plan and self-evaluation reflect this. These give a firm course, and bring improvement, but are not precise or dovetailed together in all respects. This makes fine tuning which is now needed (and, in some places, underway) harder to achieve, and are not always tightly evaluated. Refinements to strategic planning need to focus on efficiently achieving particular ambitious outcomes beyond examinations for pupils. This, in turn, needs to be more precisely checked in the self-evaluation.

The key further development the school needs to make for the pupils is in its curriculum. The curriculum has many strengths, but needs further closely targeted and carefully considered refinement, and this should now be the school's highest priority.

Full report

Achievement

- Results at GCSE, and the progress pupils make towards their examination grades, are strong across most subjects, given the pupils' starting points. Pupils from all different groups gain valuable qualifications and relevant skills, suited to them.
- Older pupils can typically explain confidently their future aspirations and good ambitions. They say that staff are immensely helpful in explaining their subject options and providing career advice. Visiting speakers and organisations usefully support this.
- Because of the pupils' enjoyment and success in many lessons, and the associated results, the destinations of pupils on leaving Haute Vallée at age 16 are positive. Pupils move on to relevant and carefully chosen further education.
- Pupils enjoy explaining their learning and are confident to do so. Rightly, they are pleased with their progress. For example, Year 9 pupils successfully designed apparatus to distil water using basic materials, and could clearly explain the scientific basis. In PE, younger boys and girls worked together to develop their netball tactics, showing strong skills. Pupils in Year 7 accurately sight read and played rhythm patterns on snare drums, based on crotchets and rests. This is an example of positive initiatives in music education in Years 7 and 8, which include all pupils learning an instrument, with the support of Jersey Music Service. These shared successes are typical across many lessons and subjects.
- Pupils develop confidence in trying new things out. Art is a popular subject which promotes this well. Pupils have a wide range of attainment in this subject, but all are catered for well and produce pleasing work, which is often very precise.
- At times, however, learning is less strong, even though the pupils may enjoy the lessons. For example, occasionally in science, pupils could not clearly explain their experiments, though they tried, or what principle was being applied.
- Many pupils in Year 11 do not, by the school's decision, take English Literature GCSE. The idea of this is to enable those pupils, who staff consider need it, to focus more on punctuation and grammar. However, it shows that the curriculum in English, while having many strengths, does not yet ensure that all pupils' learning about literature contributes effectively enough to their English language. Nor do the pupils involved have the opportunity to show their prowess, and get a GCSE in it. While Haute Vallée is a very inclusive school, this practice is not as inclusive as it could be. It is an example of a decision which requires ongoing evaluation and consideration.
- At the time of the review, the school's programme of extra-curricular activities was severely curtailed by staff industrial action. Normally, there is a wide ranging and inclusive programme of sports, arts, productions, and other options. Most pupils successfully participate, and benefit considerably. Jersey Premium students, for example, join in large numbers. This also helps build the school's sense of community.

Behaviour, personal development and wellbeing

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is attentive and keen. They want to learn and to help and support each other. They believe the school is on their side. Their relationships with each other and their teachers are strong, which leads to a positive atmosphere in lessons and around the school. Pupils also feel that the school's points system, to reward good behaviour, is encouraging.

- Pupils are generally self-disciplined. They arrive punctually for lessons and regulate their own behaviour. With good reason, they are enormously proud of their school and like to meet its expectations.
- Pupils feel very secure and well looked after. The school is a safe space for them. They say it is easy to get help from staff when needed. However, they point out too that the demand for the specialist support from the school counsellor can exceed the supply.
- Around the school and grounds, pupils enjoy each other's company and friendship. They typically behave very thoughtfully. They are respectful of each other and individual differences. In part, this is because they in turn feel respected by the leaders and staff. A parent aptly commented, 'The school treats each child as an individual and respects their own personal journeys and achievements.'
- The school's PSHE programme provides opportunities for pupils to learn about healthy relationships, online safety, equalities and diversity and supports them to develop character and resilience. Leaders rightly prioritise ensuring that pupils learn about how to promote their own physical and mental health and wellbeing, and where they can go should they need support.
- The school offers a structured programme of career education, advice and guidance and pupils told reviewers that they feel well prepared for their next steps in education or employment.
- Pupils, in Year 11 in particular, successfully take on responsible roles, such as being head pupils, ambassadors, or mentors for Year 7 pupils.
- Leaders and staff show clear evidence of how they respond to feedback and suggestions from pupils, such as improving further interactions in lessons and the toilet provision.
- Pupils report that bullying is very rare, and completely outside the school's expectations. This is supported by the school's record keeping and monitoring systems.
- However, a small number of pupils find it difficult to meet the school's high expectations of behaviour at all times. When disrespectful, unkind, or on rare occasions bullying behaviour does occur, it is well dealt with by staff. The school's successful 'Ready to Learn' system ensures that such behaviours minimise any disruption to lessons. It resolves many of the problems. However, some parents feel that difficult situations sometimes persist. That view is supported by the fact that a few pupils have received multiple exclusions. These occur despite arduous work by staff and governors to find imaginative solutions which support all involved.
- Pupils' attendance is about average for all groups of pupils. The school has strong procedures for encouraging high attendance and, rightly, sees the need to employ them more intensely still.
- Staff give high priority to meeting pupils' individual needs, whether about their learning, or for pastoral matters. Parents are appreciative of this. One commented that the school is 'amazing' in the way that it 'cares about every single pupil.'

Effectiveness of teaching

- Teaching is positive and very inclusive. Time in lessons is well used, and lessons are well paced. It is rare indeed to see any pupils, from any groups, not taking a full part. Pupils are very adept at helping each other and learning from each other. They talk about their learning with pleasure.
- Staff rightly encourage and create an atmosphere of enquiry and shared learning in many lessons. This means that pupils can raise questions and help each other.

- Pupils typically enjoy learning and consequently learn rapidly. Staff make sure lessons are interesting to them. For example, in geography, pupils were interested to think about changes in the world population, where the level of increase is greatest, and how this is relevant to them.
- Teachers show secure subject knowledge. They use this to create interesting lessons, and explain things clearly, which often enthuses and engages pupils. Pupils are clear that 'teachers are helpful,' and that teachers challenge them to do their best in lessons, which they like.
- Their subject knowledge also helps teachers to question pupils skilfully. This makes pupils think carefully. It helps teachers to check how well pupils are learning. In turn this means teachers can adjust the lessons to help the pupils if needed, with the pupils helping each other. Occasionally, these positive things do not happen when staff do not check closely that pupils really understand the activity or teaching.
- Recent results in a very few subjects have not been as good as others. In these cases, leaders have taken action to bring improvement, which is at an early stage.
- The Horizon scheme in Year 7 is successful. Learners are active and engaged. Staff challenge them in lessons to understand and develop new subject-based vocabulary and concepts. This includes relevant studies of the locality and the wider world. Teachers are skilled in ensuring that pupils take responsibility for their own learning and work well together. Reading is rightly important to this.
- The school is very welcoming to pupils from all diverse backgrounds and cultures. Leaders ensure that pupils who are multilingual learners are well supported, and this provision is being sensibly further developed.
- The curriculum and style of teaching in Year 9 is under constant review and the school rightly intends to continue to check it. The overview of the curriculum in this year group, how all the subjects and components fit together, and how they relate to those in younger and older year groups is unclear in places. Examination techniques can often be taught before they are needed, which uses valuable time.
- Across all subjects and year groups at times, although lessons are interesting and relevant, they do not always consistently build precisely on what has been learned before. Occasionally, they are not at the right level of difficulty for the pupils, or this is not checked.
- Reviewers noted that the curriculum and teaching in English, mathematics and science is presented to pupils in a slightly less engaging way than is often true in other subjects.
- Correctly, senior leaders are considering offering teachers greater flexibility and choice in how they structure lessons. They recognise too that this will require further supportive accountability for the choices teachers make.
- Provision and teaching for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well structured and inclusive. Teaching assistants make specific support available in lessons, under teachers' broad guidance. There is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of such support, but, overall, this is a clear strength.
- More widely, teaching assistants are well deployed in lessons. They enable pupils to focus effectively on the tasks, and support them if uncertain or stuck.
- The alternative resource provision (ARC) is suitably resourced and carefully managed, achieving its intention of integrating many of its pupils successfully in mainstream lessons. It is a secure, safe, and nurturing teaching and therapeutic environment. Staff are accomplished specialists, including in dyslexia and early stages of learning to read. Nevertheless, a minority of parents of pupils attending the ARC who responded to the questionnaires showed mixed views.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

- The headteacher, and senior leaders, show enormous commitment, and moral purpose. They want the absolute best for every pupil, and have done a very great deal in recent years to improve the school's provision. Consequently, pupils achieve well at Haute Vallée.
- Staff too feel well led and supported. The vast majority enjoy being part of the school's ongoing improvement. The staff, teaching and support, are a great asset. One staff member spoke for others: 'Haute Vallée is an amazing place to work. The students are always at the forefront of everything that happens.'
- Senior leaders know what is happening in their school. School strategic plans are carefully focused on taking actions that benefit pupils. This has led to the school constantly developing and improving.
- Subject leaders are empowered and proactive in leading their subjects and teams. This helps make the pupils' experiences valuable. The headteacher is aware that, despite recent successes, it is not a longstanding culture in the school for subject leaders to hold their teams accountable. Similarly, the subject leaders themselves are not always asked to account to senior leaders for students' outcomes beyond examination results.
- Using these strong processes, school leaders have successfully moved the school a long way forward in recent years, to a place of success. Leaders know that fine tuning is now needed, the same leadership approaches are no longer as suitable as they have been in the past.
- A different, more closely targeted, system is needed. The school self-evaluation, while accurate, is not tightly enough aligned with the school strategic plan, which in turn is not sufficiently focused on a broad range of outcomes for pupils, beyond examination results alone. It does not fully show how staff will be supported and held to account for achieving the necessary further improvements, including those in curriculum planning.
- In many subjects, staff enjoy the freedom to plan courses and lessons which suit the pupils' needs and provide enjoyment. However, within departments, and the line management with senior leaders, they do not always ensure that the planning of teaching content is in the right order, or always challenging enough, to maximise pupils' learning in the time available. In science, this has led to an increased time allocation in Year 9, which squeezes other subjects, rather than seeking to achieve more in the significant time already available to science.
- While the Key Stage 3 curriculum has strengths, Year 9 does not, in all respects, build on the successful work done in Years 7 and 8, including Horizon. In some year groups arts and creative subjects, religious education, and personal, social health and economic education (PSHE) are not as high profile as they might be. Pupils in Year 9 need not study any arts subjects if they choose not to. In Years 9 to 11 PSHE and religious education are given lower priority than other subjects.
- To try to address these issues, leaders have instituted a new, very imaginative, system of 'enrichment' lessons in Year 9, which could expand to older year groups. This takes strong account of pupils' and parents' views about what is important to include. It is at an early stage and its success has not yet been evaluated. A robust evaluation of this, against the needs it is intended to meet, will be required before it is extended.
- A broad range of GCSE and equivalent courses are offered, with options made in Year 8.
- Senior leaders manage staff development and training well and this has led to the improvements. Teachers at an early stage of their career are encouraged and supported correctly.

- The leaders of SEND, including the ARC, are knowledgeable and proactive. They know the pupils well, and are prepared for different eventualities. They have developed effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and mapping the provision for each pupil. They inform teachers across the school about the pupils' needs. Parents and pupils are appropriately involved. Teaching resources are apt and generally well deployed.
- Pupils feel safe and happy in the school. Leaders and staff correctly and proactively manage safeguarding and child protection procedures. Safer recruitment processes are followed in line with island expectations. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably trained in safeguarding. There is a culture in school ensuring pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and staff are alert to any signs that vulnerable pupils may be at risk. Open and trusting relationships help ensure that pupils can communicate any worries to staff.
- Jersey Premium funding is spent sensibly, based on need. Leaders and staff know the pupils and their needs well and use the funding appropriately to meet these needs.
- The governing body is determined and practical in helping the school to be successful and improve. Its members have many useful backgrounds and skills. Together, they support and challenge the school's leaders to sustain and develop the school's positive and successful work. Their local knowledge helps the school to find relevant and effective solutions to some concerns and problems.

Recommendations

The school should take the following actions:

1. Improve further the school's curriculum, including the following aspects:
 - ensuring that all subjects have, and continue to develop, a well sequenced, ambitious, programme of learning which efficiently builds on what has gone before and leads clearly to what will come next.
 - fine tuning the provision in science, specifically so that less time needs be devoted to it in Year 9, to free up time for other priorities.
 - arranging for all pupils to have suitable access to arts and creative subjects, regardless of their options, and that current strong work in music in Years 7 and 8 is built on, as appropriate, in older year groups.
 - enabling more pupils to take English Literature GCSE, and ensuring that the curriculum in English enables pupils' learning about literature to support better their understanding and use of English language.
 - ensuring that religious studies, as shown in the Jersey Curriculum, is taught to best effect in Years 9 to 11 to all pupils.
2. Sharpen strategic systems, so that:
 - school improvement planning is tightly targeted on specific, timed, precise objectives based on pupils' outcomes, with appropriate actions to meet those objectives, for which leaders and staff can be supported and held accountable.
 - the school's self-evaluation checks precisely on the success of the improvement plan, and that self-evaluation findings directly inform future improvement planning.
3. Continue, with close targeting and evaluation, its work to:

- improve pupils' attendance.
- reduce the rate of exclusions, and particularly repeat exclusions.

Information about the school

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll: 633

Headteacher: Mr Stuart Hughes

School telephone number: 01534 736524

School website: www.hautevallee.sch.je

Contextual information

- There are slightly more boys than girls at the school. About one-third of pupils are eligible for the Jersey Premium funding. This is higher than average.
- Over one third of pupils speak Portuguese as a first language, and another tenth have other first languages which are not English. Both figures are high compared to the Jersey average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has grown to nearly a quarter, which is higher than other 11-16 schools and all mainstream schools.
- The school has an additional resource centre (ARC) for 18 pupils.
- Some older pupils undertake vocational courses arranged jointly with Highlands College.

Information about the review

- Discussions were held with pupils in all year groups, informally and formally.
- Lessons were observed across many subjects and all year groups and samples of pupils' work were scrutinised.
- A group of Year 7 pupils read to a reviewer and discussed their reading.
- Extended discussions were held with school staff, including leaders at different levels, and teachers at an early career stage.
- A wide range of documents, including school evaluations and plans, and records related to child protection and safeguarding, was considered and discussed with leaders.
- Tours were made of the school's site to see its facilities, as well as discuss its security and safety. Safeguarding records and systems were reviewed.
- Pupils were observed at breaktimes, as they moved around the school, as they arrived in the morning and left the school at the end of the day.
- The school's published assessment and other data were analysed.
- Careful consideration was given to surveys of parents and staff views, specifically done for this review. These were done in different languages, in the case of parents.

The review team

The review was led by an experienced off-Island reviewer and consisted of a total of eight reviewers.

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.