

Eleventh Partnership meeting - 7th December 2016

Further feedback of the School Review Framework

The first pilot schools (3 schools) have been completed and the feedback has been very positive and also challenging. Feedback from head teachers has indicated that the review process is supportive, but also challenging, and points a clear direction of the focus of future work to improve the school.

Feedback from the head teacher group has requested the pilot phase is extended for two terms. A decision will be made on this before the end of term.

Training days for heads wanting to be part of peer review will be available in the New Year, as will further work amongst reviewers to ensure consistency is achieved for future reviews.

Other positive comments made have included that reviewers are not simply relying on data to form a view of the school but are relying on observations and information provided during the school visits.

It was the view of the Partnership that it is very important for school staff to understand the differences between the review framework and the Ofsted framework. It will be a challenge for all staff in Jersey to understand the distinctions between what is happening in Jersey and what is happening in England. This is made difficult with similar terms being used. Later drafts of the review framework document have reduced the amount of Ofsted style language, however it must be made clear that although the language may be similar or the same it is the meaning and interpretation of these words and phrases in terms of school improvement which is important.

What is required is clarity of the difference between an Ofsted process and a supportive review process being delivered in Jersey. A practical example of this would be that the independent reviewer will return to Jersey in 18 months following the review to hold the department to account as to whether the department had supported the school to improve. This illustrates the collective nature of the process.

Another key issue recognised by the Partnership is how staff perceive the type and amount of work required to prepare in accordance with an Ofsted style inspection framework and how staff will in-turn perceive the work to be undertaken in preparation for a Jersey school review. This perception is very important and the department must be clear of expectations for staff and translate this to school leaders. This will enable head teachers to confidently engage their staff in the process and reduce the opportunity of putting unreasonable and burdensome requirements on them.

It is hoped this can be avoided as schools will not be graded or put into league tables. However, the Partnership recognises that it will take a number of reviews to be carried out until trust is placed in the department to deliver in accordance with its aspirations.

Also, teaching staff should be reassured that the department will be held to account for working with the school to make progress, which will include the Chief Education Officer who will chair the school improvement board for schools requiring significant improvement.

The bigger concern is finding the balance between supporting schools through this process but also holding them to account to drive improvements in performance. Jersey has the opportunity to be different and create a school improvement service. What is positive is this is not a 'drive by' which is experienced in the UK and where schools are left to improve by themselves. The new review framework provides the opportunity to create a shared approach to school improvement and is not a blunt tool to punish schools.

The Partnership is clear about the objectives and methodology of the review. Members suggested a tweak in some of the wording to reassure school leaders, including a clear statement of why the system in Jersey is distinct to an Ofsted style system in the UK.

The areas focused on are the right areas if school improvement is to be delivered effectively. Objectivity is key amongst the review team and the inclusion of the off-island reviewers is a really important to balance this. The blurring of the edges is also significant to drive the work of education by involving teaching staff at all levels.

The success of the roll-out will be judged on the behaviour of the department before, during and after a review. Longer term, it will be about standards rising in schools.

The NASUWT members also expressed a keenness to be involved in communicating the many aspects of the review framework to its members.

Feedback from the focus groups for the Jersey Workforce survey and planning the next steps

The findings of the focus group were presented to the Partnership. These centered on the four areas of wellbeing, training, senior leadership team and pay.

Developing future agendas for the Partnership, Communications (incl. website, Partnership notes, marking the second year of the Partnership and outcomes from previous agendas

The priorities for the Partnership were reiterated:

The key priorities of work for the Partnership were agreed to be:

- Outcome from the Teachers' Survey;
- Input to the Jersey Schools Review Framework;
- Develop the autonomy agenda with a view of a cooperative model;

- Professional Conference to take stock and launch the next business plan. This should be practical for the teachers.

Future notes will include:

- The Partnership at two-years old;
- The Jersey Schools Review Framework;
- Outcomes of teachers' survey.

It is anticipated the webpage on www.gov.je will go live in January.