



## **Forest Primary School**

### **Validation report**

**Validation dates: 6 November – 8 November 2012**

**Lead validator: David Scott**

**Type of school: Maintained Primary**

**Age range of learners: 4–11**

**Gender of learners: Mixed**

**Number on roll: 154**

**Headteacher: Gary Le Huray**

**Date of previous school validation: June 2006**

**School address: Rue Des Landes, Forest GY8 0HF**

**Telephone number: 01481 756014**

## **Introduction**

The validation was carried out by a team of four validators, who spent three days in the school observing lessons, talking with pupils and looking at their work, engaging in discussions with staff and parents, looking at school records and other documentation, and scrutinising returns to the parents' questionnaire.

## **Description of the school**

Forest Primary School opened in 1999 on a purpose built site. There are equal numbers of boys and girls. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has deemed 10% of pupils, the majority being boys, as having special educational needs and/or learning disabilities. All are at School Action Plus. It has identified proficiency in literacy as the main area of difficulty. Children enter the school with a range of skills that are generally below those expected for their age when compared with the UK. The great majority of children who join the Reception classes stay until Year 6 and the numbers who leave or enter the school other than at the usual times are low. During the past two years there has been a 50% staff turnover as a result of maternity leave and secondment.

## **Making judgements**

The school and validators used a five-point scale to evaluate the school's performance. The scale is as follows.

1. Excellent
2. Well developed
3. Proficient
4. Less than proficient
5. Underdeveloped

## Summary for parents

- Pupils' enjoyment and achievement are well developed. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school, thoroughly enjoy their learning, and make good progress. They do better in reading and mathematics than in writing. More able pupils do particularly well in reading and mathematics. However, not enough pupils reach the available higher levels in writing and a small minority of boys make slow progress, especially those who find writing difficult.
- Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. Their behaviour is exemplary and they care for each other very well. They are proud of their school and Guernsey heritage. Their understanding of other cultures and beliefs, however, is more limited.
- Teaching and assessment are well developed. The use of modern technology makes lessons fun and interesting and, as a result, pupils have a real passion for learning. However, the checking of pupils' work is not specifically targeted at improving skills in writing and does not always allow enough time for learners to work by themselves.
- The curriculum is well developed and ensures that learning is creative and enjoyable. It provides many opportunities for topical project work across subjects. However, it does not provide enough scope for pupils, especially boys, to extend their writing.
- Care, guidance and support are well developed. All staff care extremely well for the pupils in their care. The checking of pupils' progress is increasingly effective in helping pupils who may be underachieving to catch up.
- The school's self-evaluation is well developed. It is accurate and involves all staff, and parents and pupils, and provides a good platform for improvement. The recently reorganised senior team are having a positive impact in speeding up the rate of pupils' progress.
- Leadership and management are well developed. The headteacher has established high expectations for the pupils' achievement and staff are supportive of this strong drive for improvement. Nevertheless, some subject leaders have yet to fully develop their monitoring roles so that they can effectively support the teaching in their areas.
- The capacity to improve is well developed. Pupils' progress is accelerating and standards are rising. This is the result of better monitoring and more rigorous use of information on learners' progress. Some area leaders are not yet fully confident in analysing this information, however. The school's planning has highlighted the correct priorities for improvement. For example, the gap between boys' and girls' achievement in writing is a key area and the impact of efforts is already being seen in that the gap is beginning to narrow.

### **Main areas for school improvement**

- Improve standards in writing, especially for boys, by: ensuring that pupils have enough opportunities to develop their ideas fully in a variety of subjects; ensuring spelling, punctuation and presentation are given a high priority in all subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching still further by: ensuring pupils understand their targets and know how to improve their work; planning more opportunities for pupils to work by themselves; matching lesson activities more closely to pupils' needs.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders by: ensuring all staff carefully check and analyse information on pupils' progress; reviewing the curriculum so that pupils learn more thoroughly about cultures beyond Guernsey; improving the monitoring skills of subject leaders.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction**

The validation was carried out by a team of four validators, who spent three days in the school observing lessons, talking with pupils and looking at their work, engaging in discussions with staff and parents, looking at school records and other documentation, and scrutinising returns to the parents' questionnaire.

### **Main findings**

Despite fluctuating trends over time and a notable dip in performance from 2011 to 2012 for Year 6 pupils, standards overall are rising and pupils' progress has begun to accelerate, particularly among the older classes. Nevertheless, although the gap between girls' and boys' achievement in writing is narrowing, it remains a priority for the school. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and as a result achieve well and make excellent gains in their personal development. Reception is well developed and children make a good start to their education.

Teaching and assessment are well developed and improving. Lessons are interesting and well resourced, but pupils do not always receive clear enough advice on how to improve their work or enough time to work by themselves. Also, occasionally, work is not always matched closely to learners' needs. Excellent relationships and positive attitudes instil a real passion for learning as a result of the well-developed care, guidance and support.

The school's self-evaluation is well developed. It now has in place much more sophisticated systems to monitor and track pupils' progress. The validation team confirmed almost all of the school's own judgements about its performance. However, not all staff are fully confident in analysing this information. Although improving, the programme of classroom observation by subject leaders is not extensive enough.

The school's leadership and management are well developed and improving. Staff morale is high and there is a clear drive and focus on raising pupils' achievement. However, the curriculum requires further review as it is not always closely matched to the needs of all learners, particularly boys, and pupils do not learn deeply enough about cultures beyond Guernsey. The school's track record indicates that it has a well-developed capacity to improve.

### **Outcomes for learners**

Pupils greatly enjoy their learning and engage in lessons with great enthusiasm. They concentrate well and contribute willingly to class discussions and debates. These positive attitudes enable pupils to make good progress in lessons.

As a result of improvements in teaching, pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate and standards are rising. Pupils generally achieve better in reading and mathematics than in writing. Standards in Year 6 are above average in mathematics, broadly average in reading and below average in writing. Less able boys, in particular, do not always make enough progress in writing. The proportion of pupils who achieve above average standards is showing strong signs of improvement in reading and mathematics, where it exceeds the Bailiwick average. More able pupils, also, do not always achieve well enough in writing.

Pupils' personal development is excellent. They become confident and enthusiastic learners and are increasingly self-reliant. Pupils work together extremely well in pairs and in groups. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually exemplary. As a result, the school is an extremely welcoming and harmonious place. Pupils are very proud of their school and willingly take on a variety of responsibilities. The school council, for example, makes an important contribution to the life of the school. Pupils have a well-developed awareness of their Guernsey heritage but a less developed sense of the culture and beliefs of other communities beyond the island.

### **The quality of provision**

The quality of teaching and assessment is well developed and ensures pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress. Relationships are well established between teachers and pupils and this has resulted in a positive climate for learning. Pupils have developed responsible attitudes towards their learning but are not always given enough opportunities to work by themselves. Feedback to pupils is regular, but it does not always state clearly what is needed to improve or reach their targets.

The curriculum is well developed and provides creative and relevant learning opportunities for all pupils. It complies with the Bailiwick's curriculum statement and ensures the well-rounded development of pupils. However, it does not always meet the needs of boys, particularly in enhancing their writing skills, and thus limits their progress in this area.

Advancement in the use of modern technology in lessons has contributed well to pupils' active engagement in lessons and their increased enjoyment of learning.

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are well developed. The school is an extremely caring community which creates a vibrant atmosphere for learning. Pupils are very well supported and looked after. Leaders and teachers are managing information about pupils' progress increasingly effectively to identify potential underachievement at an early stage and to provide additional support where needed. However, some staff are not confident in analysing this information. Parents say how well their children are supported when they join the school and there is good liaison with the local secondary schools to help pupils to adjust when they move to the next stage of their education.

### **Leadership and management**

The school's evaluation of its overall performance is accurate and provides a good platform for improvement. The process involves all staff, and parents and pupils. The recently reorganised senior team are having a positive impact on accelerating pupils' progress. The school's monitoring arrangements involve classroom visits, but while such events are more frequent than previously, they have still not been extensive enough and do not currently involve all subject leaders.

School leaders have taken effective steps to identify key priorities for improvement and have implemented appropriate strategies to raise achievement. All staff are contributing to the drive for improvement through the development of their leadership roles, although some are at an early stage of developing their monitoring skills. Nevertheless, there is a shared commitment to developing the quality of provision and to raising expectations for all pupils. Senior leaders are supporting staff well to build their capacity for improving teaching and learning.

The school's recent track record is one which shows pupils' progress to be accelerating. This has been as a result of better monitoring and improved use of information on pupils' progress. The school's planning has highlighted the correct priorities for improvement. For example, the gap between boys' and girls' achievement in writing is beginning to narrow because of well-considered efforts. For these reasons, the school has a well-developed capacity to improve.

### **Reception**

The provision in the Reception class is well developed and the spacious, creative environment allows children to make good progress and to enjoy their learning. Children develop good literacy skills and have meaningful, quality conversations with each other and with the staff. Regular and focused checks have resulted in pupils making better progress than previously in most learning areas, although there still needs to be a stronger emphasis on creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world.

### **Main areas for school improvement**

- Improve standards in writing, especially for boys, by: ensuring that pupils have enough opportunities to develop their ideas fully in a variety of subjects; ensuring spelling, punctuation and presentation are given a high priority in all subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching by: ensuring pupils understand their targets and know how to improve their work; planning more opportunities for pupils to work by themselves; matching lesson activities more closely to pupils' needs.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders by: ensuring all staff carefully check and analyse information on pupils' progress; reviewing the curriculum so that pupils learn about cultures beyond Guernsey; improving the monitoring skills of subject leaders.

The school and validators used a five-point scale to evaluate the school's performance. The scale is as follows.

1. Excellent
2. Well developed
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## **FULL VALIDATION REPORT FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS AND THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

### **Outcomes for learners**

#### **Learners' enjoyment and achievement**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school and show kindness and concern for each other. They engage in lessons with great enthusiasm and are keen to share their ideas. This was seen in a Year 3 mathematics lesson where pupils were fascinated by estimating the length of a gorilla's little finger and the tooth of a great white shark. Excellent attitudes to learning and a keen sense of curiosity help pupils to learn at a good pace.

There have been inconsistencies in pupils' rates of progress in the past due to variations in the quality of teaching, sometimes due to staff changes. Improvements in teaching and the curriculum have helped to increase the pace of learning so that most pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities make good progress overall because they are given good additional support and guidance, often through small group teaching.

By the end of the Reception Year, children reach levels in line with those expected for their age in most areas of learning, including communication and early reading and writing skills. They do less well in their creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Standards in Year 2 were above the Bailiwick average in 2012 in reading, writing and mathematics, having improved on previous years. Much of this improvement resulted from intensive intervention strategies for small groups of pupils to develop specific skills, rather than consistently high quality day-to-day teaching in class lessons.

In Year 6, attainment exceeded the 2012 Bailiwick average in mathematics, while standards in English were broadly average. Considerably more pupils reached both average and above average levels of attainment in reading than in writing, and girls performed much better than boys. There is currently a whole-school focus on raising achievement in writing, especially for boys, although some initiatives are at an early stage of implementation. Some younger pupils still struggle to commit their ideas to paper and spend too long writing the date and title, which hinders the creative process. Pupils are articulate when communicating their ideas and giving explanations but spelling, punctuation and presentation skills are inconsistent in quality across the school. Pupils show good understanding of mathematical concepts and can apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations to solve problems. They enjoy opportunities to engage in the good range of practical and investigative activities that teachers provide.

Older pupils demonstrate good independent learning skills but these are not developed consistently well in every class. For example, pupils are not always given enough time to write at length independently in order to develop fluency and style.

### **Learners' personal development and well-being**

Almost all learners of different ages and abilities are enthusiastic and become increasingly self-confident as they move through the school. They develop high levels of resourcefulness and become confident learners. For example, in an innovative history lesson in Year 6 about the Second World War, pupils were considering and discussing a range of evidence to put the dates of significant events into chronological order. This provoked high levels of critical thinking and debate. Pupils are reflective learners and make thoughtful contributions in lessons. When given the opportunity, they are able to work well independently and cooperate extremely effectively in pairs and groups, and boys and girls get along well together. Many pupils enjoy the wide range of sporting activities offered by the school and understand how this contributes to an active and healthy lifestyle.

Pupils' behaviour is mostly exemplary when in lessons, on the playground or moving around the school. They behave sensibly and with a great sense of responsibility when working outside, for example, when pupils in Year 4 were enthusiastically investigating the relative temperature of different surfaces. Pupils are extremely supportive of each other, with older learners taking good care of the younger ones on the playground and through the buddy system. They have a very good awareness of how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe from harm in a variety of situations. Pupils are proud of their Guernsey heritage but have less understanding of beliefs and cultures beyond the island.

The vast majority of learners are very proud of Forest and act as excellent ambassadors for their school. They are very effective contributors to the life of the school, taking on a variety of roles willingly and enthusiastically and carrying them out diligently. Members of the school council take their roles very seriously and are clear that they are listened to and that their activities make a difference to the school. For example, during a meeting of the council during the validation, pupils were considering the school's behaviour policy and suggesting changes. Pupils' very good attitudes to learning, together with their communication skills and a ready facility with modern technology, prepare them very well for the next stage of their education.

## **The quality of provision**

### **Teaching and assessment**

Teaching and assessment are well developed and improving. Pupils much enjoy their lessons and the positive ethos of learning in the school. Pupils are given opportunities to respond to teachers' comments and to correct their work, which results in pupils developing skills and growing in confidence. However, this is not consistently seen in all lessons.

Pupils are engaged successfully in lessons when topics hold their interest and where they are able to cope well with tasks that match their needs and ability levels. Good quality questioning often results in pupils investigating possible solutions to problems and developing independent thinking skills. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils discovered equivalent fractions through playing class bingo. However, pupils sometimes spend too much time sitting and listening to the teacher talking and are not always given enough opportunities to investigate topics by themselves.

In the majority of lessons, pupils were able to cope with the tasks that were planned for them and, in some instances, good extension activities were available to stretch the more able and to raise expectations. Most teachers are using information about the pupils' performance to make sure that their needs are met and that they learn at a good pace. However, this use is inconsistent and less able boys' writing skills do not always progress at the same rate as their other skills; this is often as a result of less clear guidance for improvement being provided through marking and assessment.

Teachers plan lessons that provide a sense of direction for most pupils. Deployment of teaching assistants to provide effective support has resulted in less able pupils making good progress in most areas. Both higher and lower ability pupils would benefit from more specific planning for their writing needs. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge and expertise, which enables them to use various styles of teaching to meet the needs of pupils. A wealth of learning resources in all areas of the school helps pupils learn well and clearly understand new skills.

Excellent relationships were seen in all lessons where pupils were considerate and caring of each other and were co-operative when working in groups and in pairs. The atmosphere in lessons was harmonious with a 'buzz' of learning, for example, where pupils were investigating information to establish rules or patterns. Pupils' behaviour is usually exemplary and respectful in lessons and this allows teaching and learning to continue uninterrupted.

The checking of pupils' learning is regular and provides some guidance on how pupils can improve their work. However, comments are often superficial and are not sufficiently focused on specific skills targets to be helpful to pupils in making more rapid progress. In some lessons pupils mark each other's and self-assess their own work. This gives pupils a

sense of responsibility for their own progress and develops reflective learning. The best examples of feedback on learning have specific targets for improvement and give pupils the opportunity to respond to comments and improve the quality of their work. However, this is not always the case across all classes and subjects.

The effective use of modern technology is seen in many lessons, where it has a good impact on learning. For example, teachers are beginning to make good use of the projection on screen to share and celebrate pupils' work. Wall displays show creative use of computer programmes to design booklets and posters to highlight topic areas.

### **Curriculum**

The curriculum is well developed. It engages the pupils effectively and generally takes account of their needs and interests. This ensures a very positive response to their learning opportunities. Visits to local areas of interest provide stimulating learning opportunities that are related to the real world.

The topic-based curriculum engages pupils well by enabling them to see how different aspects of their learning fit together. Cross-curricular provision is good at engaging pupils in topics such as the building of sea-defence walls in Guernsey. This was made more relevant with a visit to the walls, which led to a debate about whether or not a broken wall should be repaired. This provided good learning opportunities in literacy, history and geography in Years 5 and 6.

The Bailiwick curriculum is covered well and reinforced through personal, social and health education (PSHE) and themes that promote personal development and responsible citizenship. Consequently, pupils' relationships are excellent and they are extremely happy to be at school. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident and independent learners, although not all the boys are doing as well as they might. The curriculum provides pupils with a good knowledge of the island's history and opportunities to be involved in the life of the community. However, the development of their understanding of different cultures is more limited.

The creative curriculum offers a good, well-balanced range of imaginative learning opportunities which underpin improving progress, especially in reading. However, it is not yet well planned enough to meet the individual needs of lower ability pupils, especially in writing to allow them to make better progress and to be more integrated into their lessons. The provision for extended and regular writing opportunities is more limited and requires further improvement.

The range of enrichment activities is well developed and contributes to the enjoyment of learning. There are regular residential trips to France, which provide excellent opportunities for personal development, and the building of relationships. There is an extensive range of after-school activities, which include football, gardening, chess and music. Visitors bring

their expertise and knowledge into the school. For example, during the validation two senior citizens came to talk to the pupils about 'The Occupation' years in Guernsey.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is well developed and is used increasingly to enhance learning in various subject areas. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson pupils designed a lesson on tablet computers explaining the use of mixed fractions, which was recorded and then presented to the class. Pupils often use laptops in literacy and mathematics lessons to improve their skills in spelling, punctuation and presentation of written work. However, these aspects are not reinforced in all lessons.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school provides well-developed care, guidance and support for its pupils. The warm and welcoming atmosphere is evident from the moment the visitor walks through the door. Staff and pupils are kind, caring and supportive of one another. The importance of the values enshrined in the Guernsey curriculum are constantly reinforced in displays throughout the school. Pupils are well aware of them and elect the most successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors in the classes on a regular basis. Pupils respond well and take pride in these awards. As a result, the school is a vibrant and harmonious learning community.

School leaders are using data and modern technology, together with a range of other monitoring activities, with increasing effect to identify those in danger of falling behind at an early stage and to provide support to enable them to catch up. This use of data is not yet fully embedded in all staff's practice to ensure that all pupils always make rapid progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities are well supported within school and through close liaison with parents and carers and a range of outside agencies. All staff at the school know the children and their families very well, enabling them to support those experiencing difficulties in their lives. The school is also helping those with particular talents in mathematics to develop their skills in this area of the curriculum.

All staff are vigilant in these matters and the health and safety of pupils is a priority for all. The curriculum enables pupils to identify potential dangers related to the internet, for example. As a result, children feel very safe and free from potential harm, a view supported by their parents and carers. There are good procedures for ensuring that visitors to the school are monitored and that risk assessments are carried out on all activities within the school and beyond. The headteacher is fully trained in child protection activities but the school is yet to ensure that all staff are regularly updated through awareness training. Attendance is above the Bailiwick average and pupils arrive punctually to school. Very few pupils miss school regularly and staff work effectively with the welfare service to resolve any issues that arise.

Parents of children new to the Reception class speak warmly of the welcome they have received for the school. One parent commented, 'The school has made every effort to help my son settle at the start of Reception.' A range of visits and meetings help to inform parents well and enables children to quickly become confident and eager learners. The school also helps to prepare pupils effectively for the move to secondary school through visits and meetings. There is detailed discussion, for example, about those pupils with special educational needs in order that they can receive effective support as soon as they arrive.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Self-evaluation**

All staff contribute to the process of self-evaluation. For example, subject leaders are involved in the monitoring of books and the planning of lessons which feed into the school's 'annual audit'. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have introduced a programme for monitoring the quality of teaching involving learning walks. Additional time gained when teachers' attend off-site training is used well to provide further monitoring and support. The leaders for literacy and numeracy have also observed lessons in their subject areas but this has not yet occurred in other subjects. The senior team currently lead this process but they acknowledge the need to involve all subject leaders in monitoring and coaching teachers.

The school has correctly identified the need to strengthen the consistency of monitoring by all subject leaders. A key to this will be to ensure they have the training to enable them to make accurate judgements on the evidence they collect. The school's self-evaluation also takes into account the views of parents and pupils through questionnaires and surveys on how to improve the school. The report on evaluation and planning (REP), while helpful, would benefit by focusing more on outcomes in order to make the document more concise.

The school, in partnership with the Education Department, has rapidly adopted new systems for the collection, tracking and analysis of information on pupils' performance. This process has been led by the deputy headteacher and has enabled all staff to access up-to-date information on the progress of each pupil and class. In addition, staff have received well-considered training from the two Education Officers in the use of data. Moderation of teacher assessments occur once a term and termly interviews are planned with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to discuss each pupil's performance. This means that class teachers and the senior leadership team are clear as to what progress is being made and where support is needed to keep pupils up to speed. However, there is only a fairly modest amount of classroom observation and the analysis of progress against the action points is not yet sufficiently robust.

The school has a very accurate view of its performance, so that it has a good understanding of where its strengths are and where improvement is needed. The priorities to move the

school forward have been accurately identified. The evidence in the REP and from other sources gathered during the validation process enable validators to corroborate the school's judgements that:

- enjoyment and achievement are well developed
- pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent
- teaching and assessment are well developed
- the curriculum is well developed
- the school's self-evaluation is well developed
- leadership and management are well developed
- the capacity to improve is well developed.

The only area in which the validators differ from the school's judgment is care, guidance and support. The school judged this area to be excellent. Validators agree with the school that levels of care are excellent, and that the arrangements the school makes for the transition of pupils from one stage of education to another and the use of technology to support pupils' learning are well developed. However, they found that the area of pupils' safety and welfare were proficient because staff did not always receive regular update training on child protection issues. Also, the analysis and use by all staff of information on pupils' progress is at an early stage of development, and therefore judged to be proficient.

Thus, taking all the evidence into account, validators judge that:

- care, guidance and support are well developed.

Validators endorse:

- the school's overarching priorities for improvement, which are largely consistent with their own recommendations for the school's future development.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

The school's well developed leadership and management have successfully accelerated many pupils' rates of progress through well-planned strategies to improve the quality of provision. A strong focus on promoting the key values of the Guernsey curriculum has resulted in pupils' excellent personal development and highly positive attitudes to learning. Leadership and management responsibilities are widely shared amongst the staff. For example, all permanent class teachers hold a subject responsibility. There is a strong sense that staff share the headteacher's high aspirations for the school and all are committed to driving improvement in their areas of responsibility. Each has clearly identified key priorities

for improvement and these are closely linked to the central priorities in the school improvement plan.

New systems for recording and analysing information about pupils' progress are enabling leaders to build up a clear picture of how well different groups of pupils are achieving in each class. This, in turn, allows leaders to keep a close eye on pupils who show signs of underachievement so that additional support can be planned. Leaders ensure that challenging targets are set for all pupils and this is helping to accelerate learning for most pupils. However, not all staff are confident at analysing information on pupils' progress.

There is a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils achieve equally well and develop excellent personal qualities that will equip them well for the future. Leaders are aware that girls perform better than boys, especially in writing, and have introduced measures to tackle this inequality, such as improving the range of books that appeal to boys and reviewing the curriculum. These are at a relatively early stage of implementation but it is obvious in many lessons, especially at Key Stage 2, that boys' enjoyment of and engagement in writing is improving.

Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Pupils get on well together, demonstrate a sense of responsibility for and pride in the school and show sensitivity for others' feelings. The school has strong links with the local community and pupils take part in many events such as concerts, the local Eisteddfod and Floral Guernsey. Local church ministers, representatives from charities and other local agencies take assemblies while other visitors share their knowledge and expertise with the pupils. Pupils communicate with and raise funds for a school in Kenya and this provides a wider perspective of life outside Guernsey. However, the curriculum does not yet give enough attention to extending pupils' awareness of cultural diversity beyond the island.

Recent changes of staff at both senior and middle leadership level mean that some are still getting to grips with their new responsibilities. The headteacher is effectively supporting these leaders in developing their roles. For example, three middle leaders have been given responsibility to drive improvement in the use of assessment, the development of key skills and monitoring the quality of teaching. These specific projects involve the middle leaders in senior management meetings, providing experiences that are building their capacity to contribute to the school's strategic development. Subject leaders are appreciative of the opportunities to attend training which they say has enhanced their effectiveness. Some have had the opportunity to conduct learning walks, where they visit each class for a brief observation to check on specific aspects of teaching and learning. These, along with checks on teachers' planning and pupils' work, are helping leaders to identify more clearly the strengths and weaknesses across the school. However, there are few in-depth lesson observations that enable leaders to focus on learning for particular groups of pupils, such as less able writers in order to identify exactly what needs to be improved.

Resources are used well to support school improvement, for example by providing opportunities for teachers and support staff to improve their skills in promoting good learning. Pupils benefit from a wide range of good quality resources to make learning interesting, including the well-planned use of video clips to engage pupils, laptops and the recently acquired projection equipment which teachers use effectively to introduce new learning and share examples of good work.

Parents are very supportive of the school as shown by the overwhelmingly positive responses to the parents' questionnaire. Links with external agencies enhance the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities. The school works effectively in partnership with the local special school.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's track record over time shows a fluctuating trend with a dip in performance from 2011 to 2012, where standards at the end of Year 6 in English were broadly at the Bailiwick average with mathematics being above. However, at the higher levels pupils did better in English than mathematics. Most notable, was the relative underachievement of boys in writing. The school now has in place much more sophisticated data systems to monitor and track pupils' progress, and since the start of the academic year pupils' progress has begun to accelerate, particularly among the older classes. As a result of targeted interventions the gap between boys' and girls' achievement in writing is beginning to be narrowed. This is as a result of the drive and determination of the newly reorganised senior team. These improvements indicate that the school has a well-developed capacity to improve.

The school's self-evaluation procedures have provided an effective mechanism for making recent improvements. This is because all staff are involved in identifying the main areas for development and the strategies needed to implement them. The school monitors new initiatives effectively to ensure they are having an impact on children's learning. When this is not the case, swift action is taken to rectify the situation. For example, following recent changes in the data collection systems on the island and a number of new staff joining the school, it was decided that training was needed to show staff the power of data and the special reports that could be accessed for analysis. Similarly, during the past year the school had been concerned with the type of information on pupils' progress that was being used. So, in a major new initiative, the school has moved away from the 'predictive' model to giving pupils and parents the 'actual' level of their achievement.

The school's planning for improvement has provided a helpful 'road-map' to accelerate pupils' progress. The priorities are well linked to the core areas where improvement is needed and these are well understood by staff. The plan has ambitious but realistic targets and well-judged mechanisms for reaching them. A strength of the plan is the way the school uses it, carefully reviewing what has been done and what still needs attention. In this way, the plan provides a clear direction for the school to make further improvements.

## **Reception**

Provision in the Reception class is well developed. Children enter the school with a range of skills which vary from year to year and are generally below those expected for their age when compared with the UK. By the end of Reception, most children reach age-expected levels in the different learning areas. Children make good progress in their personal development, behaving very well and developing good relationships with others. They are encouraged to co-operate, share and to take turns and to become responsible citizens.

Classrooms are well organised and planned to provide a well-resourced learning space for the children. The recently refurbished outdoor area is used well to extend learning and the flow between indoors and out is suitably well established. An outdoor construction area was enjoyed by a group of boys who were happily building a 'house' out of life-sized foam bricks. Here they demonstrated a good level of co-operation and problem solving. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and those that the children choose for themselves, where they show good concentration and perseverance. The daily teaching of letters and sounds is beginning to impact well on the development of children's reading and writing skills and language skills are developed through skilled questioning. The more able children receive well-developed lessons, supported by appropriate resources, which link the blending of sounds and writing and allow them to make good progress. In one lesson, less able children had access to an interactive whiteboard activity, which allowed them to move bears to the correct initial sounds that they heard. However, these pupils were not given the same opportunity to write sounds in order to embed their learning.

There has been an increased focus on the checking of information on children's progress but it is not yet rigorous enough to have had a significant impact on their learning. Learning files helpfully provide information on children's progress on the six areas of learning and where there is a need for additional support.

There are many opportunities for role-play, for example, in the Three Bears' Cottage, where the children can dress up and re-enact the story. One group did this convincingly, using appropriate voices and costumes and allowing each other to have their turn to speak and act. This theme was continued in the phonic sessions and with an art theme in the window where position and direction were illustrated by the bears. There are sometimes missed opportunities to extend the children's creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world, which is the weakest area of learning. The Early Years

Foundation Stage is led and managed well and staff receive regular training opportunities. Staff work closely with parents, sharing learning and progress information at school, which ensures the appropriate level of support for children.

### **Comments on the views of parents and carers**

There was a very high response to the questionnaire from parents and carers with returns representing most pupils in the school. These indicate that the great majority of parents hold very positive views about the school, with almost all indicating that their son/daughter enjoys their education, that the teaching is good and that the school is well led and managed. This was summed up by one parent who commented, 'Forest has been an excellent school for our children and the teaching staff are enthusiastic and caring.' These views were fully supported by the group of parents who spoke with a validator.

Almost all of the parents and carers responding believe that the school caters very well for their children's personal development. They expressed confidence that the school helps their child to become a confident individual, to be responsible and to contribute to the community. They also believe that the school provides their child with a range of interesting activities outside normal school hours.

Whilst responses were very positive in all areas, about one in ten tended to disagree that the school provides them with good quality information on what is taught and a similar proportion do not believe that the school helps their children to work well at home. A number of parents and carers also expressed individual concerns but these were by no means representative of the vast majority. Validators found that in the school there is some variation in the quality and timeliness of communication and the school is keen to resolve this issue.

### **Main areas for school improvement**

- Raise attainment in writing, especially for boys, by:
  - ensuring lower attaining pupils have enough opportunities to develop their ideas and are well supported in recording them
  - extending opportunities for pupils to write at length in a variety of subjects
  - reinforcing good literacy skills by picking up on spelling, punctuation and presentation across the curriculum.

Increase the proportion of excellent teaching by:

- ensuring that pupils receive consistently effective advice through marking and feedback so that they are clear about their targets and what is required to improve their work
- ensuring that lesson introductions are not too long so that pupils always have sufficient opportunities to work independently
- always matching lesson activities more closely to pupils' needs.

Strengthen the impact of leaders at all levels in driving improvement by:

- ensuring the school's new system for checking and analysing information on pupils' progress is used by all staff to accelerate progress still further
- reviewing the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of all learners, particularly boys, and strengthens their knowledge and understanding of the world
- strengthening the skills of middle managers to monitor the quality of teaching effectively in order to develop clear lines of accountability.