

Drumachose Primary School

Building the capacity of middle leadership

Drumachose Primary School is located in the town of Limavady. Over the past five years the enrolment has increased steadily and at the time of the October 2017 inspection, stood at 339 pupils.

This case study focuses on the school's efforts to build the capacity of middle leadership.

The inspection team identified the school as having a high capacity for sustained improvement and found all three of the key areas - outcomes for learners, the quality of the provision and the quality of leadership and management, to be outstanding.

The school was previously inspected in 2010 shortly after the appointment of the current principal; the outcome was 'good' and the general feeling at the time was one of satisfaction.

Reviewing the school development plan

The initial reaction to the 2010 inspection was to review the school development plan (SDP) and draw up new or revised action plans.

However, at that time the bulk of this work was undertaken by the principal himself. These action plans were distributed to middle management within the school, but they were not communicated effectively to the teachers or governors.

As a result there was little ownership of the planning process and therefore an incomplete understanding of the rationale for the action plans. Consequently, there was little impact on teaching and no impact on the pupils' achievements. The school had a document, but not a working one.

Establishing effective leadership structures

As structures changed within the school, largely due to staffing changes, the principal saw an opportunity to stimulate the staff with a view to accepting the challenge of improving the school so that at the next inspection the outcome would be much better – the target was to make Drumachose an 'outstanding' school.

While the initial focus was to establish an effective senior leadership team and to develop the role of Governors, the senior team knew that more needed to be done to develop subject co-ordinators as middle managers.

The senior team wanted the co-ordinators to take much more responsibility for the action plans for their subjects. In doing so they would have to develop a greater understanding of their role in monitoring and evaluating the provision across the school and, in particular, make more effective use of the wide range of data at their disposal.

Developing the role of co-ordinators

The school organised a series of workshops based on information available from the ETI website that provides a series of reflective questions specifically for co-ordinators such as

- How are the priorities for development identified?
- How do we know that what we are doing is having an impact on the children's learning?
- What evidence do we have that this is the case?

Some of the most challenging aspects to developing the co-ordinators' role was encouraging them to become more active in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and the pupils' work in their subject, to look at a range of first-hand evidence and provide feedback to the teacher.

Evidence gathered by the co-ordinators ranged from regular reviews of teacher planners, the children's work in their books and the quality of marking.

Monitoring and evaluating

The senior leadership team monitored the progress made by co-ordinators. This was facilitated by asking all co-ordinators to maintain an evidence file containing the SDP, the action plan relating to their area of responsibility, a section on the monitoring and evaluation undertaken as well as notes and an overview sheet summarising the outcomes of meetings with teachers.

By the time the action plans had been established the co-ordinators had much greater ownership of their content. They had a sound understanding of how the qualitative and quantitative data could be used to map progress and, more importantly, were enabled to identify clearly where, and why, improvement was taking place in the classroom.

The school engaged with C2k to assist with the development needs identified in helping teachers have a greater understanding of this data. Previously they had been assessing pupils but had not been fully aware of how to use the data gathered from these assessments to the best effect.

The outcome of this was to empower the co-ordinators and the teachers.

Teachers have developed a greater understanding of what is working, or not working well

enough, in their classrooms. They feed back to the co-ordinators who in turn adapt the action plans, adjusting targets wherever necessary. Teachers all have a better understanding of the SDP and the action plans that flow from them. Monitoring and evaluation has become a continuous process led by a more proactive middle management team.

For further information, please contact:

Drumachose Primary School

Website: <http://www.schoolsites.org/drumachoseps/site/homepage>

Email: info@drumachose.limavady.ni.sch.uk

Phone: 028 7772 2751

The Controlled Schools' Support Council

Website: www.csscni.org.uk

Email: info@csscni.org.uk

Twitter: @CSSC_NI

Phone: 028 9531 3030