

Values-based Education, Quality Mark Audit at Ben Rhydding Primary School

Assessors' Report

Introduction

Dr Neil Hawkes, Founder of Values-based Education (VbE) and Mrs Jane Hawkes, visited the school on the 24th September 2024 to conduct a Quality Mark Audit of the school. The purpose was to assess whether the school is meeting VbE's criteria, so that it can be acknowledged as a Values-based School.

Before the audit visit, the assessors scrutinised evidence drawn from the school's website and its detailed self-audit evaluation.

A timetable for the day was given to the assessors, which provided a day full of varying experiences and meetings, which gave a deep and comprehensive insight into the life and culture of the school and its community.

Aspect 1 Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a strength of the school.



We had a very warm welcome by the Headteacher and Office staff who made us feel very welcome as visitors to Ben Rhydding Primary School. During the day no effort was spared by all members of staff to ensure that we felt cared for and valued as people and professionals.

At the heart of wellbeing are the excellent relationships between staff and staff and pupils. Whilst taking part in *meet and greet* at the end of the day, we were made aware that Ben Rhydding is a school where the children enjoy being at there. Parents and children were full of smiles of appreciation and gratitude, as pupils left their classes to go home. There are very respectful relationships between staff and parents, and we saw evidence how parents supported the school during the recent Ofsted inspection which went very well with a positive outcome. A real sense of community pervades the school as evidenced in our conversation with the Chair of Governors.

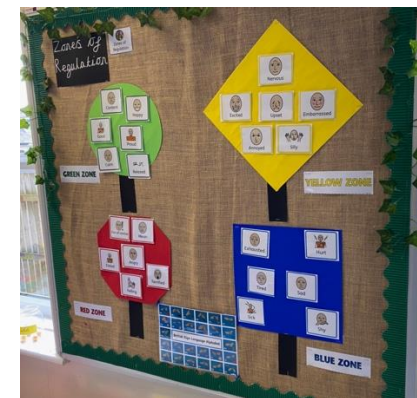
The school has excellent procedures and routines to ensure the care and safeguarding of the pupils. The pupils so obviously feel very safe in the school, which is demonstrated in the way that they are relaxed, happy and purposeful during both lessons and at break times.

Staff feel cared for, and structures and routines are in place to give both quality PPA time and time to mix with other staff members. This is a school where quality is put before quantity, so staff are calm with pupils, other staff and parents. They create time to give their attention to deep listening to the pupils. This can be seen too in the way lessons are conducted with pupils be given space and time to reflect and interact

with each other and teachers. We think this is one of the reasons why the quality of teaching and learning is so good across the school.

In talking with the Chair of Governors we received insights into the recent history of the school and the way that governors and parents are so supportive of the direction the school is going in terms of its curriculum and character building.

A consistent practice across the school is the focus on zones of regulation, which underpins self-regulation of the children, supporting their wellbeing.



Lots of practical ideas that support the pupils regulate their moods, feelings and emotions.

Aspect 2. Compassionate Leadership

In our view, leadership at all levels is very good in the school. The Headteacher's vision to introduce Values-based Education as the educational philosophy to underpin the school's life and work is giving a vision to enable pupils to be the best people that they can be in terms

of their thinking, learning and behaviour as emerging citizens in our complex world. Values-based education is still in the early stages of development, but we applaud all that is already set in place to create a values-based culture and learning environment. Compassionate leadership is evident in not only the senior leadership team but across all staff. They act as wonderful role models for the pupils to emulate. We observed the Headteacher's Assembly: Voice of Assembly. Here we witnessed his compassionate leadership in action, as he encouraged the children to reflect on leadership qualities that make positive contributions to the world. Here is a headteacher who really does listen to his pupils and values the pupil voice.

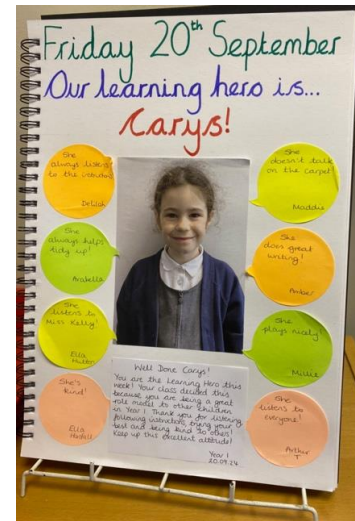


Aspect 3. Behaviour and Relationships

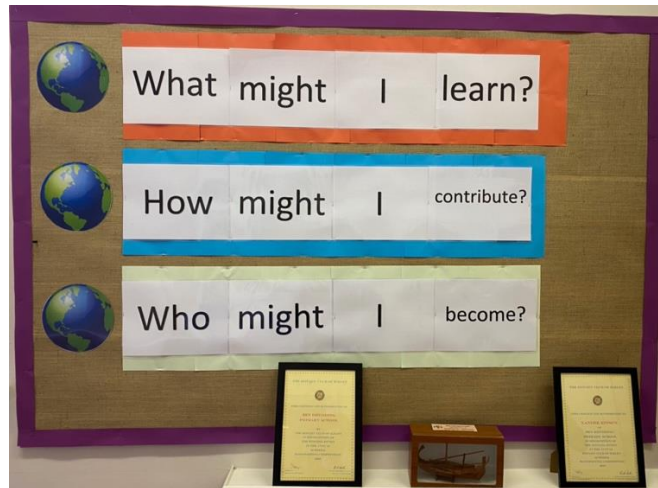
Behaviour and relationships are exemplary throughout the school. The teachers are relaxed with the pupils because they have such good, respectful relationships. There is therefore a climate for learning in a relaxed, yet alert environment. We felt that the children are fully engaged in their lessons at Ben Rhydding – they are interested in each other. Playground behaviour is very supportive and we appreciated the

quality of “buddy” relationships, which we were told often continues after the children leave the school.

Year 6 pupils told us that they value the school’s focus on learning heroes, which we thought was a very good way to enable the children to see themselves positively and feel safe and accepted in the school encouraging. It fosters good behaviour and maintains pupil engagement, which is a key to pupils self-regulating.



Aspect 4 Teaching and Learning



The school has an inspirational and creative way of engaging pupils in learning with its focus on three questions as illustrated above. These questions foster a growth mindset in the pupils, engaging them not only in acquiring knowledge but in exploring ideas and thinking about what sort of people they want to become.

The two Philosophy for Children (P4C) lessons in Years 4 and 6 were exemplary. They fully engaged the children in philosophical questioning as they learned the skills of thinking and questioning in open debate, without looking for right or wrong answers. These were highly inclusive lessons that were models of good practice.

In Reception, the children were happy and relaxed to be in school and were fully engaged in the learning activities or having time with the teacher or TA. The class atmosphere gives the children a great beginning to their time at the school. We loved the learning dolls which

introduce the learning values to the children.

The quality of teaching and learning was good throughout all lessons observed and the children were making appropriate progress in the understanding of the concepts being taught. It was clear that the values vocabulary is being used during lessons. Pupils are happy to talk about the importance of values in the school and how they help them in their learning.

In Year 2 we sensed a reflective learning atmosphere with calming music being played in the background. The teacher exemplified, what is common in all classrooms, caring teacher pupil relationships and ways to positively motivate to behave in a values-based way.



Special educational needs advocacy in the school is a strength of the school. SEND children are fully integrated into the school with appropriate provision.

We have visited schools that say that they are values-based but staff behaviour doesn't model the school values. The staff and pupils at Rhyddings Primary really do live their values, in a culture that models the values that pupils are being invited to learn about. The adults in the

school community are strong, courageous role models who walk the talk of values. They are emotionally literate and help pupils to nurture their own internal worlds of thoughts and feelings.

Aspect 5 Reflection

Rhyddings Primary School is a reflective school, in the sense that being reflective is an important aspect of learning both for adults and pupils. When talking with the pupils we observed that they use what we call the wisdom cycle, which means that when they are asked a question there is a slight pause whilst, they consider their answer. This is a key skill in developing critical thinking and awareness generally.



The school's focus on its learning values, in the context of growth mindset, enables pupils to think and reflect about the importance of values.

Aspect 6 Values in Action

The school's world centred values approach to learning is creating what we term an outward facing school. In the sense that pupils are encouraged to think and experience beyond their community. We heard how pupils in Year 6 had visited the Town Council and spoken about their litter picking initiative. The school actively engages parents in workshops to help them understand the school's curriculum.

General Comments

The school's self-audit was an accurate assessment of the school at this stage of its values journey. We believe that Rhyddings School will grow as a Values-based School as it continues to embed the philosophy and practices of Values-based Education (VbE). We can see it becoming a hub in the area that other schools will want to visit to discover what makes the school such a safe and happy place to learn. The school acknowledges that it is in the early days of being a VbE school and with thoroughly enjoyed the many conversations we had with staff which we hope will help them to address the next steps.

Next Steps

To build on the school's existing values-based practices we would suggest:

1. Consider how you are developing a full ethical vocabulary that the children can use to guide their thinking and behaviour. The book, *From My Heart*, which we left at the school, will support you. Also, the VbE website will help, as it has lots of ideas and suggested resources. See www.valuesbasededucation.com Develop a manageable action plan that can be implemented over the next year. We will put you in touch with other VbE schools.
2. Consider deepening and expanding aspects of reflection as written about in the book, *The Inner Curriculum*, which we also left with the

- Headteacher. We are also sending a booklet about how to enable pupils to take brain breaks and to pause during the day.
3. Think about ways that you could proclaim to school visitors that you are a values-based school. This could be in the form of a sculpture, mosaic, glass engraving, flag etc. Also noting on your website that you are a VbE School and display the QM logo.
 4. Consider growing as a VbE school, so that you can be seen as a values-based hub that other schools can visit and emulate.
 5. When the time is right consider applying for the Values Enhanced Quality Mark.

Conclusion

Throughout our visit we were never in doubt that we were experiencing a school that is values-led; one that is embracing a values-based way of teaching and learning. The school has a values-based culture, which is supported by the wider community and encouraged by the school governors. At the end of our visit, we were delighted to award Rhydding's Primary School with the Values Quality Mark. Congratulations!



Dr Neil Hawkes and Mrs Jane Hawkes

Founder and Trustee of IVET Foundation and Values-based Education

27.9.2024