

Dear Parents and Carers,

An external validation visit was undertaken at Onchan School on the 13th and 14th May 2024 as part of a programme of external validation of schools commissioned by The Isle of Man Department of Education, Sport and Culture (DESC). The aim of the external validation visit was to promote continuous improvement and to deliver consistency, share best practice and deliver positive outcomes for children and young people. The visit was undertaken by two external, independent external validators from Tribal Education.

External validators looked at a wide range of evidence presented by school leaders, including the school self-evaluation, and sampled the work of the school during the visit. These activities were focussed on key areas based on the self-evaluation of the school and included visits to a cross-section of lessons, meetings with staff and pupils, gathering the views of parents where appropriate and scrutiny of documentation.

During the visit, external validators considered key areas of focus across mainstream and the Specialist Provision Centre which were explored in collaboration with the school leaders to validate school leaders' own evaluations.

The dedicated leadership, teaching and support staff team are fully committed to meeting the individual needs of every child at the school, so that children grow and develop as fully rounded and caring young people. They work seamlessly together to this end. This is reflected in the courteous and respectful behaviours that your children demonstrate throughout the school. Children are polite towards one another, enjoy welcoming visitors to the school and are ambassadors for its shared values which they live and breathe every day.

Your children are focused and confident in lessons. As one young person summarised, 'learning here is fun!' Children are especially motivated by opportunities to discuss 'Big Questions' which emerge from and extend topic-based learning. This positively challenges them in ways that the school is now looking to explore further through their planned review of the curriculum offer.

Parents and carers clearly recognise and greatly value the positive impact that the school makes on children's lives. This is because leaders and teachers have built strong partnerships with the local community based on mutual trust and have established well understood routines and practices that promote effective two-way communication. As one parent put it, 'the school is a well-oiled machine!'. This culture both supports the current learning and progress for your children and provides a solid foundation for the next phase of the school's focused development and improvement planning.

Provision and support for children with additional needs is a strength. This is based on an understanding of each individual young person and strong partnerships with parents and carers. There is regular two-way communication between school and home which enables the positive impact of applied learning to extend into family life.

There are many existing and well-established strengths within the school. Leaders are aspirational about the opportunities ahead and focussed on the next phase of continuous improvement. The school's leaders and staff are reflective and are clearly focused on priorities which have a direct impact on your children's learning and progress, within a fully inclusive school environment which places the learner at the heart of everything it does.

As part of their continuous self-evaluation, the school has already recognised the need to further develop the core purpose of curriculum and assessment, so that children make and apply stronger connections across all aspects of learning as they move through the school.

In addition, the shared leadership approach throughout the school will be further developed, building on a foundation of effective leadership which is already established.

These positive refinements will further enrich the learning experience for your children within a school culture of growth and development. The areas of growth identified above, as part of the external validation visit, are being reviewed and actioned by the school as part of a continuous cycle of self-evaluation.

Kind regards

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Lead Validator

External Validation Team