

Dear Parents and Carers,

An external validation visit was undertaken at Ballakermeen High School on the 7th and 8th 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 which were explored in collaboration with school leaders to validate school leaders' own evaluations. Senior leaders continue to collect evidence and review judgements across all areas of self-evaluation.

The focus for this external validation visit was 'The Quality of Education' and 'Behaviour, Relationships and Attitudes.'

The school's leaders have a clear vision and ambition for the school which has focused on developing and embedding a shared culture based on the values of Kindness, Honesty and Respect across the whole community. They have focused tirelessly on reinforcing expectations in relation of standards of behaviour to provide the basis of an effective learning environment where every young person can achieve their best. This is paying dividends in the positive attitudes displayed by the majority of young people, and the respectful way in which learners both communicate with and behave towards their peers and members of staff, as is seen when young people move around the school. The school's intent is to build on this foundation of behaviour expectations to further develop the learning and teaching based on positive relationships that the teachers develop with your children.

Assemblies offer a creative and shared opportunity to celebrate the school's values in addition to all that your children achieve and contribute to the school and wider community based on these values.

Leaders' emphasis on this values framework, which is reflected in all aspects of school life, has laid a solid foundation for the next phase of the school's focused improvement to further raise standards. The clear self-evaluation priority is to develop the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment so that it offers appropriate engagement, motivation and challenge for your children, matched to their individual needs. In doing so, leaders are determined to build on the strong areas of practice in the school. The school has identified the need to focus on learning and teaching across the curriculum.

Effective learning across the school is most evident when teachers build meaningful relationships with your children and you as partners in the process; teachers understand barriers to learning and share successes, and your children are given opportunities to make choices about their learning. This impacts positively on learner motivation, engagement and their ability to work together with their peers. Leaders are focusing on embedding the features of the most effective lessons consistently across all subject areas.

The school has already actively sought to develop a flexible curriculum which meets the needs of all young people. This includes the 'Pathways' and 'Bridge' programme and vocational opportunities, often in partnership with the University College Isle of Man, which provides personalised and engaging learning pathways to meet the needs of all your children.

Leaders now aim to further extend this programme as part of their commitment to a fully inclusive offer.

This approach demonstrates how leaders are constantly seeking to reflect on what the school offers; and they are focused on the next stage of development for the continued benefit of your children.

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. Leaders are determined to ensure that the school offers the very best learning experience for your children.

Kind regards

Nicola Morris

Lead Validator

External Validation Team