

Dear Parents and Carers,

An external validation visit was undertaken at Castle Rushen High School on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> February 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. The school is aware that it would be beneficial for senior leaders to 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.'

The school's leaders have actively sought to develop a curriculum which meets the needs of all students. Successful aspects of personalised alternative provision were seen in outstanding outreach support and within aspects of the Quest curriculum in Key Stage 3. The latter is a particularly creative way of aiming to bridge the gap between primary and secondary styles of learning and is designed to support your children in their smooth transition to the school. Leaders are aware that the Quest programme will need to be further evolved to really maximise its impact on learning, the school are working proactively to do so.

At the other end of the age range, the Sixth Form is a key strength of the school. The curriculum offers a mix of academic and vocational pathways, which is valued by Sixth Form students, who are confident and articulate ambassadors for the school. Students can clearly articulate how the Sixth Form has shaped their learning, progress and future aspirations and ambitions. Leaders in the Sixth Form have established a clear relationship between the curriculum offer, academic progress and guidance and support which impacts positively on students' achievements and their destinations after leaving Castle Rushen High School.

Teaching and learning is an area school leaders are prioritising within their self-evaluation. Leaders are aware of the need to refine the curriculum offer based on the interests and aspirations of students and feedback from staff. Leaders are being proactive in developing consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, ensuring that teaching offers appropriate engagement and challenge for your children, matched to their individual needs. Leaders at all levels are considering how lesson planning and class-based assessment promotes increased engagement to ensure all students receive appropriate support and challenge.

The school understands that parents and carers are an important part of the learning journey, school leaders have been reviewing their communication approaches to ensure that you have the information needed to support your children at home.

The school's commitment to the rounded development of all its students is reflected in a wide enrichment offer including the creative arts, sport and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Success in the latter is to be celebrated and positively promotes the development of students' skills, attitudes and values.

Leaders are constantly seeking to reflect on what the school offers; they understand the challenges and 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.

Kind regards

*Nicola Morris*

Lead Validator

External Validation Team