



Dear Parents and Carers,

An external validation visit was undertaken at Willaston School on the 1st October 2024 as part of a three-year cycle of external validation visits of all schools and educational services 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 all learners. The visit was undertaken by two external, independent external validators from Etio (formerly known as Tribal – Education Services).

The external validation team 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 validation 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 learners, gathering the views of parents/carers where appropriate and scrutiny of documentation.

During the visit, the external validation team considered key areas of focus (known as 'validation trails') which were explored in collaboration with school leaders to validate school leaders' own evaluations.

A passionate and deeply held commitment to inclusivity lies at the heart of everything the school does. As a result, the dedicated teaching and support staff team work seamlessly together to meet the individual needs of every child. This commitment also ensures that school provides a wonderfully nurturing environment for your children to both learn and develop as fully rounded young people. For example, the 'Morning Club' provides a safe, welcoming and stimulating atmosphere for a group of children to start their day feeling positive about themselves and others. This is a really distinctive feature of the school's proactive approach to children's wellbeing and the impact that it has on their learning throughout the rest of the day. Your children come into school in the morning smiling, and also leave school smiling at the end of the day.

Parents and carers recognise and greatly value this approach and comment enthusiastically on the difference that it makes to their children's lives, both within and beyond school. As one parent said of their child's learning experience, 'they bring their school interests home with them'. Parents and carers also identify the quality of the relationships between children and staff as a major strength of the school and appreciate the ease and openness of communication with teachers and leaders at every level.

The many learning opportunities are rich and matched to the needs of your children. Your children are engaged in their learning and there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in classrooms.

Leaders are now seeking to further build on these approaches, and many associated strengths, to shape the next phase of its development as a school, which exemplifies best practice in placing the individual learner at the very core. The school are particularly keen to work in partnership with you as parents/carers, alongside your children, as part of a community that shapes an aspirational 'Willaston School learning offer' so that everyone involved with the school understands the importance of learning at the heart of everything they do.



The school are also developing more consistent approaches to assessment so that your children are aspirational for the future in an ever-changing world, and so that leaders and teachers can enhance the way in which assessment is used to support learning to accelerate the progress of your children.

Wellbeing of the whole school community is central to the work of the school and leaders are focussed on supporting staff so that they continue to have the greatest impact on your children.

The areas of growth identified above, as part of the external validation visit, reflect leaders' ambition for every one of your children to enjoy their learning and succeed, and 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