Dear Parents and Carers,

An external validation visit was undertaken at St Mary’s R.C School on the 8th and 9th 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 the school leaders to validate school leaders’ own evaluations.

St Mary’s R.C School is a special place. Pupils, parents and governors all greatly and equally value the positive impact that its welcoming ethos and faith character make on the rounded development of pupils. This is ‘lived’ on a daily basis. As one parent put it, the school has enabled her child to ‘shine’ since joining; another reflected on the ‘transformational’ effect that it has had for her child within a fully inclusive learning environment.

Pupils flourish based on their starting points and develop as confident and articulate learners, able to apply knowledge and skills in many different ways. This reflects the impact of an innovative curriculum and creative teaching that ensures pupils have the foundations for future success.

A variety of approaches have been interwoven to provide an engaging structure for learning which is consistently understood and applied by pupils as they move from subject to subject, aspirational staff and leaders underpin this. The school recognises their successful curriculum approach within the foundation subjects and are keen to apply this approach to English, maths and science, leaders recognise that this is a priority for children to continue to make connections within their learning.

The classroom environment is calm but purposeful and pupils work collaboratively together, modelling the school’s core values. Due to the personalised focus the school has on the learning needs of your children, leaders and teachers have already identified that their teaching and learning needs to challenge all learners of all abilities and ages. Leaders and teachers will continue to focus on these areas moving forward.

Leaders’ focus on personalised and inclusive learning pathways for all pupils, matched to the individual child, means that those with additional needs are seamlessly integrated into mainstream provision. Despite its many strengths and successes, leaders are not complacent about what the school is currently achieving. School leaders have already addressed the need to refine their assessment processes to allow them to further analyse the needs of all children and ensure that this continues to inform their future priorities.

The school are constantly seeking to reflect on and further refine the learning experience for your children, they are innovative in their approach to ensure it impacts positively on the learning journey.

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