



**Alex Cartney**  
**Teacher of Science**

*“Living in the Isle of Man exceeded my expectations. I really feel at home here.”*

## Hear from the team - what could a career with us offer you?

Alex made the move from Northwich in Cheshire in August 2020 after being initially alerted to the ‘Island offering’ during his teacher training and then suitably impressed by a subsequent visit to Manx shores. He now hopes to establish roots here and be joined by his partner in making the Isle of Man their home.

**Read his story to find out how relocating has been a great move for him.**

### What prompted you to relocate to the Isle of Man?

I was undergoing my teacher training when Adrienne Burnett (head of Ballakermeen High School) came to talk to our cohort and I thought “this is worth having a look”. We got talking and I was later invited over to an open evening, enjoyed it and shortly afterwards applied for a job.

I was fortunate enough to be successful and during the trip, which was my first time over, I got a real feel for the place. It looked good and I liked the vibe so I decided to take the plunge!

### How are you finding Island life 6 months on?

I have to say living in the Isle of Man has exceeded my expectations. This is definitely my type of place. The people are friendly and, as I love the great outdoors anyway, there are so many places to go. I feel really at home here.



### What was your understanding of the education landscape?

I assumed most aspects would be the same as in the UK and that is largely the case. There is a different exam board, of course, but on the whole the rest is fairly similar in terms of teaching. Ballakermeen is a brilliant school and the pupils are amazing to be honest. There is a real community spirit around the school which is refreshing.

### What do you enjoy most about working as a teacher on the Isle of Man?

The fact you feel you are having a genuine impact and making a real difference to the lives of young people. I have worked in schools for quite a while, but it is more inclusive over here with a real broad offering. For example, the Ballakermeen special unit carries out some wonderful work. No two days are the same and the school community is so supportive. That is an ideal platform on which to build.

### What opportunities are available?

Plenty! In terms of ambition, the school encourages you to progress as far as you want, develop and gain more experience and, ultimately, take your career in the direction you wish to take it. Alongside my training which is ongoing, it is so helpful to be in an environment where there are promotion prospects in a school which is really supportive of my ambitions.

### What is your lifestyle like now?

My lifestyle is excellent with a fantastic work-life balance. As I enjoy the outdoors, the Isle of Man is perfect and I also play for Douglas Rugby Club. They've been so welcoming and it's a great way to make friends, stay fit and active.

### What would you say to someone who is considering relocating here?

I would encourage anyone to move here. It's great for the rural, outdoors life which I love and everything is so accessible. I love learning about the Manx culture and there is a really positive atmosphere. Definitely give it a go - you won't regret it!

### Have you any long-term ambitions?

I'd like to stay here long-term and hopefully my girlfriend can move over as well. It is an amazing place and, while I am still finding my feet, I think the fact you can turn one way and be 10 minutes from town, turn another and be 10 minutes away from the countryside and then turn another and be a hop, skip and a jump from being in a plantation or up on the hills is a real appeal for me.





**David & Sian**  
**Teacher of Music and**  
**SENCO**

*“Everyone was so welcoming and friendly, and I quickly fell in love with the school.”*

As young students who met at university through their love of music and promptly fell in love, it wasn't too long before the Isle of Man cropped up in conversation.

After all, as a Manxman, David Karran had always thought he may opt to return to the place he calls 'home' one day. However, it's fair to say the 'three legs' in the middle of the Irish Sea had probably not even been on the radar of Sian, who hails from Pontypool in South Wales.

Fast forward 15 years and the couple, who met at the University of Huddersfield, have not only made the Island their home but are even working together at the Island's largest school!

'From the moment Sian and I got together, I always said I would like to move back here at some point but that was very much a long-term aim rather than coming back for the sake of it.

'Yes, it was always at the back of my mind but after university we had settled in Bradford, so it had to be good for both of us if and when the right opportunity came about,' explained David.

**Read their story to find out how relocating has been a great move for them.**



So, what was the overriding factor for these two talented brass musicians?

Well, there wasn't just one, added Sian, although the job offer she received early last year was the start of it all in earnest.

I was appointed (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) at Ballakermeen High School) with a view to start at Easter, but I negotiated a later start date with my new Head as I wanted to ensure there was a proper handover period before I left my previous role. Then other factors came into play such as the commute!

It used to take Dave an hour to get into work – and that was on a good day – and it took me half an hour. Last year, Dave was traveling more than 10 hours a week which equated to about 50 miles a day and there's little enjoyment in that after a while. You can lose so many brain cells just sat behind a steering wheel. It is great to now be able to go to work and come home without all the traffic hassles and it makes such a difference to the work life balance.



As we live in Onchan, my new commute takes just eight minutes by car! Of course, family and travel are factors too but overall, the offer had to be right and it was!

### **Education and opportunities in the Isle of Man**

An advert for a position at Ballakermeen initially arose when David and Sian were enjoying a holiday and it caught their eye.

Sian added: We really were in a fortunate position when the job cropped up as neither of us were unhappy nor desperate to leave so always felt if it was meant to be, it would fall into place. We talked about it while on holiday and I applied as the advert said all the right things.

From there, Sian – along with the other shortlisted applicants from the UK - was invited to an open evening at Ballakermeen and very quickly got a feel for the school.

In truth, it took me about half an hour to make up my mind that I wanted the job, she continued.

Everyone was so welcoming and friendly, and I quickly fell in love with the school. Since being appointed the community spirit amongst both the students and teaching staff has been constant throughout and is very much part of the ethos of Ballakermeen. Even when you bump into students outside of the school environment – and you are bound to in an Island this size - it has always been a positive experience.

No sooner had Sian been appointed a SENCO, David switched from his position as Director of the Arts for Outwood Academy Ripon to



accept a role at Ballakermeen as a teacher of music, something which plays a key role in their lives away from the profession.

As well as being appointed musical director of his boyhood brass band, Onchan Silver Band – the organisation where he first learned to play under the late Gordon Astill – David and Sian have helped establish the Isle of Man Brass Academy, designed to nurture Manx talent and unearth the next generation of musical stars.

Tutors who love making music and playing gigs, both are keen to share their passion for music with the wider community with David attributing ‘Manxies’ as generally musical people and young Island students as very perceptive and enjoyable to work with.

As for working together? Well it’s not that unusual, explains David, it wasn’t planned this way but has worked out well and if we need to see each other in a school context during the day, there is time to catch up.

### Exploring the Island

It may sound cheesy but this is a really beautiful Island, admits Sian. You can walk up the hills, go to the seaside, explore plantations, basically see whatever part of the Island you wish to, all in a short period of time. Everything is so close, you never have to go too far.

Obviously I’d been here on trips before with David but at times it still feels as if you’re on holiday as you can see the sea every day and, on a sunny day, feel as though you could literally be anywhere. We’ve both found that people are generally very helpful in the Isle of Man. We walk up South Barrule with the dog, virtually everyone says hello. We don’t know who they are but it’s just that spirit and general friendliness wherever you go.



### How would you describe it to someone who's never been?

Well for a start, I can honestly say moving to the Isle of Man is simple, straightforward and rewarding. Yes, having David's family here is an advantage, but I can genuinely say we have settled pretty quickly and built up a network of friends. It also feels very safe. I certainly never worry about going out on my own at night to meet friends.

Going back to that community spirit, something I've noticed that I quite like is the fact there is focus on supporting local produce and small businesses here. That approach is refreshing.

So is the fact that, for the first time in years, David can find time for sport alongside his music.

Most of our free time is taken up by music, of course, but I've found time to join a cricket team, I play a bit of football for Douglas Athletic and enjoy some table tennis. I'm just reliving my childhood really!



## Rachel & Derbiled Secondary School Teachers

*“The people, the job, the  
experience is once in a  
lifetime.”*

Two professional women who hailed from the same county in Northern Ireland but did not know each other have now developed a firm friendship in the new place they call home while strengthening the Isle of Man’s education cohort.

**Read their story to find out how relocating has been a great move for them.**

Rachel Lucas and Derbiled Boyle may have lived in the same province of Ulster but they never met each other until university.

Now Rachel and Derbiled share a home and a passion to help educate youngsters in the Isle of Man. After completing an undergraduate degree in Belfast, Rachel moved to Liverpool for her PGDE.

Hailing from Carrowdore, a small village in County Down, she decided to make the move to the Isle of Man in August 2020 after accepting a role at Ballakermeen High School. Only a few weeks earlier, Derbiled had relocated from Saintfield, County Down, to take up a post as a Religious Education teacher at Ramsey Grammar School.



It's funny how things work out isn't it,' said Rachel.

After living in the countryside all my life, I wasn't too keen on city life as it felt a bit claustrophobic. I was planning to go back to Northern Ireland, although there was no guarantee of jobs for geography teachers, when the head of Ballakermeen came across. In her presentation she spoke about the Island and it really appealed. To cut a long story short, I ended up getting a job.

At that point, I found out through the tutor that Derbiled had been offered a teaching position and was looking for a place to live. She suggested we could live together which has worked out really well. My head teacher Adrienne even arranged viewings of property for us and had furniture delivered. She has gone out of her way to help and the Island already feels a very natural fit.

As really outdoorsy people, both are enjoying Island life. Hockey fan Rachel joined Valkyrs and has been 'pleasantly surprised' at the standard of Manx hockey. As a keen rider, Derbiled has signed up to a local riding school and joined a running club. It's been great to meet new friends and I am on target to run a half marathon which I would never have thought possible. I didn't even run before I came here! I now spend my weekends going for long walks and hiking and love the relaxed lifestyle. It is a nice pace of life and provides many opportunities to explore.

The career prospects and progression provided in the Isle of Man has also not gone unnoticed by both women. The rate you can progress here is clear, added Derbiled with opportunities to gain experience in all areas of school life and the chance to apply for extra roles within the school. As well as that, the atmosphere is very laid back. All the schools work together and you get an opportunity to meet teachers from other schools.

That view is echoed by Rachel: One of the first things that struck me was how welcoming everyone was within the school and the sense of community both in and out of work. The welcome was warm, my new head was there to meet the boat at 4.00am and we both followed her car to our new home.







I didn't really have pre-conceived ideas so I take every day as it comes. What I can tell you now is that it provides a safe, relaxed way of life and the countryside and views are second to none.

There are lots of benefits for teachers too such as monthly housing payments. It all helps.

As for anyone considering relocating as a teacher: I would tell them that, for me, it has been the best thing I have ever done, added Derbiled.

The people, the job, the experience is once in a lifetime. Everyone here is so welcoming and you make a whole new family on the island. The Isle of Man is simply beautiful!



**Richard Karran**  
**Director of Sixth Form**

*“The best kept secret is the  
community spirit.”*

At a time when many in the teaching profession are looking to take their first or next step, the Isle of Man is providing exciting opportunities to thrive.

The chance of a progressive career alongside a great work-life balance is truly making it an Island of opportunity.

Don't take our word for it, however, just ask Richard Karran who returned home after 13 years in Nottingham.

**Read his story to find out how relocating has been a great move for him.**

[How long have you lived on the Isle of Man and what made you move \(back\) here?](#)

I have been here for three and a half years now. I moved back as I wanted to spend more time with my family. In addition, I was beginning to realise just how beautiful and peaceful the Island is and, with each visit home, became increasingly keen on settling here. The mix of 'town and countryside' really appealed, as did the ability to escape to the coast for fresh air was very much a motivating factor.

As a teacher who believes education should be more than just an academic pursuit, I was also captivated by the emphasis that Manx schools place on 'extra-curricular learning' and how involved they are in community life. This area of student development is simply on a different scale as most schools in the UK just don't see it as such a priority.





### What do you enjoy most about your job?

I am Director of Sixth Form at Ballakermeen High School. It is most definitely the best job role I have ever had and I just love the hustle and bustle of working in such a big and comprehensive school. The facilities in our school, and indeed every state school in the Island, are fantastic and the envy of so many schools in the UK. I feel our Island places a very healthy emphasis on post-16 education and the Department of Education, Sport and Culture has invested a lot of money into this provision, ensuring we can help our students achieve their aspirations.

### How has your move to the Isle of Man benefitted you?

Well, as a starter for 10, communication between the five main secondary schools is superb and this means you get the chance to work with a number of different colleagues and learn from them.

We don't really have a culture of competition between schools (okay, perhaps in sports fixtures!!) because we are all so proud to be 'Islanders' and just want the best for all students, whether they are in our school or at another. This creates a very healthy 'sharing culture' and a feeling that we all stick up for each other. Whilst I enjoyed my school in the UK, it was quite insular, and I didn't feel there were too many opportunities to share good practice outside of our own walls. In addition to this, the Department of Education, Sport and Culture has backed me financially whenever I have asked to go on a course in the UK. To have this kind of support is incredible and helps us feel we are always progressing professionally.

### What difference has living back on the Isle of Man made to your work-life balance?

I feel a completely different person than I was three years ago. My work-life balance is much healthier because Islanders tend to have their priorities right in this area. From day one, I was encouraged to work hard in school but to 'relax hard' out of it. The plethora of outdoor activities available to us means that we can escape our job at weekends in such a positive manner.

There are naturally a range of activities in the UK but the accessibility of these opportunities is just better here. In addition, it never takes more than 10 minutes to travel to a friend's house and that has been a lovely change for me - my social life is a hundred times better!



### What's the best kept secret on the Isle of Man?

You want me to limit it to one?! There are so many. Most people will focus on the incredible areas of natural beauty or the range of coffee shops and restaurants within walking distance.

However, for me, the best kept secret is the 'community spirit'. When I first moved here, I had more offers of help within a month than I had received in 15 years in the UK. When out walking, people regularly stopped and asked if I wanted a lift and I even received cards of support, wishing me 'Good Luck' in my job (I often didn't know these people!). This made me realise how valued the teaching profession is in the Isle of Man and also how much people want us to succeed. There is definitely a culture of celebrating success in education (you only need to read the local paper each week to see that) and this rubs off on the students too - when they

see their achievements being celebrated, it makes them want to achieve even more.

### What are your ambitions for life on the Island?

For the moment, I feel that I have the best job in the world so I am not necessarily wanting to rush towards promotion. However, the more I live here, the further invested I become in our shared vision to become a beacon of 'Outstanding Education'. Maybe, if I don't make too many mistakes, I will one day advance into a role where I can help progress this vision, not just for the post-16 students but all age groups.

As for life outside of work, I want to keep exploring and enjoying the natural beauty on my doorstep. During the latest lockdown, I have visited places that I have never previously seen and some of the views were breath-taking. This Island never stops giving, it is a wonderful place to live.