



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School	Micklem Primary School Boxted Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 2QH
Head/Principal	Mr Josh Swift
IQM Lead	Miss Kelly Palmer
Date of Review	20th May 2024
Assessor	Ms Kasia Fejcher-Akhtar

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group	Schools in Search of Excellence
Ambassador	Mr Roger Leeke
Next Meeting	10th July 2024
Meeting Focus	To be advised

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Summer 2022	22nd June 2022	No
Autumn 2022	12th October 2022	Yes
Spring 2023	8th February 2023	Yes
Summer 2023	7th June 2023	Yes
Autumn 2023	11 th October 2023	Yes
Spring 2024	28 th February 2024	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group

The IQM Lead attended all available Cluster meetings in the current cycle of assessment and brought along another member of her team who is also the school's Mental Health Lead. This has increased the school's participation in the meetings and added to their personal and professional development.

7th June 2023 Gothic Mede Academy

At this cluster meeting, the academy shared its practice of how they were using the "Junior Duke" Award to expand the cultural capital of disadvantaged pupils. Micklem Primary School has looked into and is considering ways they could make this idea work in their setting. There are similarities between the communities that both schools serve, therefore a lot of the award offers will be relevant to the Micklem's population.



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11th October 2023 – Hunsbury Park Primary School

The school reflected on three aspects of the practice shared in the meeting with a view to a possible trial, or implementation at Micklem Primary School:

- They familiarised themselves with Blossom's website to discover lots of useful resources on Occupational Therapy (OT) needs with practical tips for managing OT therapy in class and the whole school.
- Considered whether to introduce colourful semantics as a scaffold for writing across the school, or individual children.
- Whether to develop a Wellbeing Ambassador pupil role and link it to the development of a Micklem Wellbeing Strategy Toolkit.

28th February 2024 – White Trees Independent Special School

This meeting presented opportunities to ponder over the school's current Wellbeing Toolkit. The issues that were considered:

- Possible introduction of, "I'm Okay/Leave me Alone" wristbands for children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).
- For the Mental Health Lead to investigate First Aid Kits which are more personalised than a Wellbeing Toolkit.

Evidence

- School website.
- Annual IQM Evaluation of Flagship Project and Next Steps.
- Various documents, e.g. Special Educational Needs (SEN) register, timetable, whole school attendance concerns and SEN Needs Statistics, available during the meeting.
- School Tour.
- Observation on arrival (including parents).
- Informal interaction with staff during the tour of the school.
- Pupils' work.
- Recourses and displays.
- Newsletters to parents.
- Notices and information boards.
- Physical environment.

Meetings and discussions with:

- Headteacher.
- IQM and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinators (SENDCo) Lead.
- Two Pastoral Team members.
- Four staff members.
- Four parents.
- Six pupils across the age groups.



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Additional Activities

This was the Assessor's third consecutive visit to the school, which allowed for a first impression comparison of the physical external environment on the arrival, between now and then. The school is aware of its 60th typical building and compensates its plain appearance with vegetation and child-friendly outdoor equipment. This creates a contrast with a busy road and a residential estate around it. On entering the school grounds, there was the immediate feel of order, calm and structure that is conducive to the school community's wellbeing.



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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

Responding to the increasing number of pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs admitted during the last couple of years, the school created the Engagement Curriculum and developed a pastoral team around them to manage the difficulties those pupils presented with. The project has been successful for the pupils concerned, the staff involved and the whole school that extended its inclusive principle to a group of pupils they are not designated to cater for.

The Engagement Curriculum was designed with specific pupils in mind to channel their energy spent too often on disruptive behaviour to focus on learning instead. A range of hands-on activities, short sessions on academic tasks, substantial input from Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education and various therapies proved to be appropriate approaches leading to positive outcomes for all.

A dedicated pastoral team is now fully operational and its practice and skills are recognised by staff as a positive intervention that leaves teachers free to teach. Such cooperation benefits all affected as there is an understanding of the value of support and progressively noticeable improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitude towards school and learning. This is evidenced in a significant decrease in suspensions and no exclusions, at a time when other local schools are seeing an increase in behaviour-related serious issues. Working under the direction and alongside the Inclusion Lead, the Pastoral Team (Mental Health Lead and Nurture Teaching Assistant) is well placed to adhere to and promote the school's ethos and inclusion agenda.

The Mental Health Lead, who attends the IQM Cluster meetings with the IQM Lead, has acquired knowledge and experience to support pupils and staff in mental health-related issues. She is growing in her role, bursts with enthusiasm and displays true dedication to pupils and their welfare. Being at the same time a Forest School Lead, she incorporates aspects of its outdoor curriculum when working with SEMH pupils in school.

The Nurture Teaching Assistant has settled into her role and formed positive professional relationships with colleagues. Like her peer, she is non-class based and thus available "on call" to wherever her support is required. In the conversation with the Assessor, the Nurture Teaching Assistant came across as keen to learn though she has already accumulated a considerable level of skills and developed resources to provide effective support to pupils and teachers.

Since the introduction of the Pastoral Team, the school has not had any member of staff leaving due to the behaviour demands of the pupils. This is one way of how the impact of the Engagement Curriculum and Pastoral Team can be measured. More importantly, the school does not lose staff that they invested in and developed into effective practitioners. Class-based staff feel they are better able to focus on supporting children's needs as they are not overwhelmed by spending most of their time and attention on the most demanding child. This arrangement includes all learners in educational activities at the level they function emotionally and cognitively. The school's values: be kind, be respectful and aim high are not compromised, on the contrary, they are reinforced through more frequent adult/child face-to-face work and differentiation.



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The Flagship Project has been recognised by all the Assessor spoke to and evidence viewed on the day of assessment as successful in outcome (all pupils moved to their next destination) and enriching through practice. So much so, that the school has based its next IQM project, "Using the Engagement Curriculum Model to Create an Internal Alternative Provision" on the knowledge and experience they gained through it.

The effectiveness of the Project has been acknowledged by the visits of Hertfordshire Improvement Partner (Autumn 2023) and confirmed by Ofsted (November 2023). Both external agencies commented positively on the school's improvement in the quality of education with Ofsted stating that, "changes to the way the curriculum is taught have helped to ensure that pupils are engaged in their learning".



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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

The leaders in Micklem Primary School review their provision frequently; they swiftly amend aspects that do not work, which allows for building up on practice as opposed to having to radically abandon something. This tells me about their good strategic planning and desire to minimise wasting time and resources. The next year's action in the Flagship Project is an example of such an approach. The school is using the Engagement Curriculum Model to create an Internal Alternative Provision to meet the needs of a group of SEMH pupils. In this way, the school is utilising skills and resources that are already in place from the previous years.

The newly created provision will serve ten Key Stage 2 (KS2) pupils and seven KS1; all children either already have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), "or for whom assessment for EHCP will be the next step". They have been identified predominantly for their SEMH characteristics but many have also specific learning difficulties and come from vulnerable families. The school has a basket of assessment tools to baseline the children to ensure the right curriculum and resources from day one.

The Internal Alternative Provision will be strengthened by adding a qualified teacher to the team; the candidate has already proved herself to be suitable for the post during her time on a supply basis. The biggest challenge for the team will be to compensate and for pupils to catch up with lost learning due to SEMH barriers. However, having already planned and delivered successfully for SEMH pupils last year, the school is well-placed and prepared to take on this task. Experience with designing an appropriate curriculum and matching it to the children's EHCP outcomes, staff will support pupils to access learning, "whilst always ensuring that they are prepared for the next stage of their learning. The impact of the project will be measured through wellbeing data (such as attendance, engagement with activities and suspensions), academic progress and pupil and parent voice".

Judging by the steps outlined for the next 12 months, there is a comprehensive plan of provision in place that includes all stakeholders: Governors, staff, parents and external sources. The diligent IQM Lead's attitude to the IQM Cluster meetings and what they offer, makes me think that should there be an opportunity to amend the project due to discovering something new or worth trying, the Micklem leadership will do just that.



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Overview

Since accepting the post of Headteacher two years ago, the Headteacher has been building a team around him to fulfil his vision where inclusion is a non-negotiable feature. The school ethos and values: be kind, be respectful and aim high are “drummed in us every day” according to a member of staff. The school has introduced a two-day induction period for new staff to ensure a clear understanding of the culture and expectations of all. By emphasising the schools’ ethos and modelling behaviour daily, the leaders created a working and learning environment where staff and pupils want to do their best. There is no ambiguity in terms of what the school stands for and what role everyone plays either when teaching or learning. Staff and pupils relate to each other positively and respect each other’s differences because they believe in their common aspiration to aim high and give their best in the circumstances.

Leadership at Micklem Primary School has been described by all stakeholders the Assessor talked to on the day of the assessment (staff, parents, and pupils) as approachable, dedicated and fulfilling the school’s mission statement: learning, achieving and working together. The Inclusion Lead is highly thought of by colleagues and parents for her calm, confident professional conduct. In her role as SENDCo and Inclusion Lead, she tackles her high-level workload with theoretical and practical knowledge of pedagogy and SEND. The consistent strategic planning of leadership to deliver on their ethos and education is impacting better pupils’ outcomes and growing the good reputation of the school within the immediate and wider community.

The school has a new Chair of Governors who has been on the Governing Body for quite a while and thus is familiar with the practice issues. The inclusion agenda forms part of conversations that are frequent between the Governors and leadership. The Governing Body recognises the positive impact of the inclusion ethos and is supportive of the school’s work in sustaining and developing its practice.

Although the school has a considerable outdoor space that wraps around the two-storey building, the school is in the middle of a residential estate and has two busy roads in the vicinity. Nevertheless, the leaders managed to conceal the unattractive exterior with vegetation and child-friendly educational equipment thus creating an oasis for children to mark their space as safe and nicer to the immediate outside of the school boundaries. Once crossing the school gate, pupils know what is expected of them and adhere to behaviour policy and the school’s rules. In the community, where many children come from chaotic homes, such an environment impacts pupils having a positive and calm start to the day.

In a recent Ofsted report, the school has been recognised as effective in its behaviour management. The IQM Project that focused on SEMH pupils, who present with major behaviour issues of their needs are not met, has contributed to that effectiveness. The school has a plethora of evidence to show what worked with disruptive children as well as data of reduced suspensions and no recent exclusions. It is also due to the Engaging Curriculum and proactive pastoral team that SEMH pupils are well-educated and provided for their wellbeing. Teachers do not leave school due to excessive behaviour issues; they are happier to be able to focus primarily on teaching.



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Post-pandemic, the school is addressing the relaxed attitude some parents have to attendance. Having achieved 93.5% from September to April 2024, it is not in a critical state but below its ambition and the county/national guidance. Their "Whole School Attendance Concerns Provision Map" evidences a detailed strategic plan and diligent procedures to improve its figures. They explore every external help the parents and school can gain. In addition to that, the successes that the school has with engaging pupils with learning through a range of interventions and support will help to overcome some of the barriers to attendance in future.

There has been a marked improvement in parental involvement since the last year. This is the result of relentless effort from the school to make parents understand their own children's needs as well as others. Traditionally, parents were involved when the inclusion was around their child, but less tolerant towards other children's difficulties. This is now changing because the school is prepared to have constructive conversations with such parents, as well as prove their effectiveness. The parents described the staff as, "great listeners, helpful by offering massive support and great with children. They do everything they can to make children learn and be happy". Staff confirmed that parents are appreciative of the school's work and more active in offering practical support, e.g. doing some gardening or painting to make the space nicer for children.

The school seeks Pupil View frequently formally and informally. They have established ways of gaining their views such as through the School Council, mentoring schemes and pastoral care alongside formal questionnaires. Pupils confirmed that there are, "plenty of adults to talk to and the Headteacher listens too". Their latest mission is to improve school dinners. Pupils said that they are kept busy and have many opportunities to enrich their learning and knowledge of the world around them through visits, trips and extra activities. Those able have a chance to take part in a maths challenge or play instruments. Children have high aspirations for their future; those who met with the Assessor wanted to be a footballer, an actor, a tennis player, a teacher and a doctor.

The school is developing its image of being effective for all. Recently it has recognised the need to diversify its curriculum further and strengthen the classroom practice. This will be the role of a newly recruited Deputy Headteacher, who will provide hands-on support to teachers and support staff.

The school continues to move from strength to strength in terms of its superb inclusive practice and I am firmly of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark to maintain its status as a Flagship School. I therefore recommend that the school retains its Flagship Status and is reviewed again in 12 months. The next review will look closely at how the school has interacted with its Inclusion Cluster and promoted continuing outreach. Evidence of cluster working will underpin the capacity for the school to maintain its Flagship status.

Assessor Ms Kasia Fejcher-Akhtar

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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 Joe McCann MBA NPQH
 Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd