



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 Mr Josh Swift

Date of Review 4th May 2023

Assessor Ms Kasia Fejcher-Akhtar

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group Schools in Search of Excellence

Ambassador Mr Roger Leeke

Next Meeting 7th June 2023

Meeting Focus TBC

Cluster Attendance

| Term | Date | Attendance |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Spring 2022 | 20th April 2022 | Yes |
| Summer 2022 | 22nd June 2022 | No |
| Autumn 2022 | 12th October 2022 | Yes |
| Spring 2023 | 8th February 2023 | Yes |

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Leadership of the Micklem Primary School values an opportunity to visit other settings and to share as well as learn from various aspects of teaching and learning practices and leadership issues. The school's Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator (SENDCo) attended three out of four cluster meetings and brought back to school information and ideas regarding Continuing Professional Development (CPD), working with external agencies and pupil voice.

In view of presentations and taking part in conversations about approaches to CPD, Micklem Primary School has now been implementing changes in how they manage staff training. There is a shift into more personalised bespoke programmes with a greater emphasis on staff wellbeing. Leadership adopted a hybrid approach to delivering CPD



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with a combination of online (the school invested in training packages produced by Hertfordshire Local Authority) and face-to-face training sessions with several of them built into the scheduled staff meetings to manage the workload. There is a wish, agreed by staff, to have more doing than talking activities during the training times.

The school took some ideas from the cluster meetings regarding benefits from external support to pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Though there is no unity in services across different counties, when discussing their own circumstances, the schools can entice ideas that have potential to work in their settings.

At Micklem Primary School, pupil voice has always been heard and sought but a cluster meeting showed how it is possible to expand this part of evidence gathering to inform the school's effectiveness. This will be a focus for the school's development next academic year and is particularly interesting in view of some shift in the school's demography as a result of people moving from London to this catchment area.

Evidence

- IQM Flagship Award Self Evaluation document
- School's website
- Safeguarding leaflet for visitors
- Newsletters and publicity material
- A wide range of internal documents relating to IQM (pupil voice, case studies)
- Examples of planning, teaching strategies and resources shared with me in the meetings

Meetings held with

- The Headteacher and IQM Lead
- Staff
- Pupils
- Parents
- A Governor

Additional Activities

- Participation in DEARS presentation and coffee morning
- Attending No Outsiders assembly
- Visit to Forest School
- Visit the DEARS class for presentation and chat with the children
- Visit the Caterpillar group
- Visit to lunch time provision – the Quiet Club
- Casual conversations with staff and pupils during the tour
- Informal observations prior to entering school and when waiting



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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The current project of The Engagement Curriculum has been the result of the school striving to provide the best education for all pupils. Having a group of children who found it difficult to cope with the age-appropriate curriculum and expected pace of learning as well as a large group of pupils in one room, the leadership embarked on a project to design and execute appropriate form education for them. This venture required diligent financial, curriculum, pastoral and staff recruitment preparation to meet pupils' Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), specific learning difficulties and other needs, for example, the Covid legacy of missing regular school-based learning. The leaders researched the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), Key Stage 1 (KS1) Standards and Collett Assessing Pupil Progress System (CAPPS) to develop the Engagement Curriculum approach, which confirmed that its bespoke content and personalised planning method will deliver the best education for the nominated pupils.

The project has been led by senior leaders and approved by Governors thus proving that the school's inclusion ethos runs through and influences decision making. By having the Headteacher and SENDCo directly involved in this initiative, the leaders not only model the best practice to staff responsible for delivering the programme but also are a tangible example of the school's aim to provide the best education for all.

The Assessor witnessed the outcome of the project on the day by being given an opportunity to engage with the DEARS class and access several sources of evidence, for example, pupils' books, planning, pupil voice, presentation by pupils. By now, the project has been well established and for the group and the school considerable benefits are noticeable on a daily basis through much improved behaviour and pupils' progress is evident through data collection using CAPPS, reading and writing scores.

Several pupils at the centre of the project present with complex SEN that are typical of children admitted to specialist settings. This meant that the school had to invest substantially, both in time and money, in training staff and producing resources as well as adapting physical spaces to create an educational environment.

Being fully aware of the scope of the task and cost from the outset, leadership took a long view and when planning and investing, they made sure that the benefits stretched beyond the lifespan of the current group. There are plans in place to disseminate the learning from the project to the rest of the school thus keeping staff updated with research regarding SEN pupils.

The school has a sound monitoring system to track the academic and social and emotional progress of children for whose benefit the project has been initiated. Together with various assessments, including bespoke CAPPS "borrowed" from a local Moderate Learning Disability (MLD) school, they provide undisputed evidence of the success of the DEARS class in all aspects of provision. The pupils progressed in academic attainments but also in attendance and attitude to school life. There are some remarkable figures illustrating improvement in attendance, for example, from 86.5% to 99.6% and 92.3% to 98.5%. Pupil voice conducted by the school and pupils' views heard during the meeting with the Assessor confirm the high level of enjoyment children have when learning in the DEARS class and the transformative impact of the provision on their self-esteem and 'feel good' factor.



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The strategies and pedagogy practised in the DEARS class has broadened the school's understanding of SEN which impacts positively on the whole school. There are plans to maximise the impact of the project across the whole school in the future but already there are areas, such as lunch time provision which successfully implement DEARS practice.

The Forest School that, apart from regular teaching sessions operates also as a lunch time provision, has been set up over three years ago as part of the IQM project. Ever since, it has been immensely popular with children as an enjoyable place to go and effective learning experience. It is a pleasure to witness this aspect of the school's operation flourishing and how the serving staff are full of enthusiasm and conviction about the benefits of outdoor experience for pupils' education and wellbeing.

Equally, a lunch time 'quiet club' has been set up with children in mind who need their own space with adult supervision to develop inter-relationship skills for the pupils to access, in future, bigger and busier spaces like the playground.

Having developed plans and practice of such provisions, the school is in a good place to adapt or expand in line with changing cohorts and fluctuating levels of pupils' needs. It is commendable that Micklem Primary School builds on its practice and experiences with a focus on remaining truly inclusive.



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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

Flagship Project Title: Wellbeing – not just a buzzword

Leaders prioritised wellbeing as a focus of the next IQM project in response to the immediate pupils' issues but also with a view of establishing a model that can be used going forward. As the title implies, the school aims to address pupils' wellbeing in conjunction with providing the environment where pupils learn best. The project is also a response to a high level of suspensions over the last year and staff leaving due to the behavioural demands of the children.

The key areas of the project are identified as:

1. Create a pastoral team (Mental Health Lead and 2 other non-class based members of staff).
2. Gathering evidence through assessments.
3. CPD for staff (building on training obtained during setting up and working in DEARS).
4. Producing a timetable and securing resources.
5. Communicating with parents.
6. Using baselines and Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) to set targets and goals.
7. Designing monitoring and recording methods.
8. Engaging with research to reflect and evaluate the project.
9. Reviewing the model and adapting accordingly.

The project will utilise many of strategies, ideas and methods that proved to be successful with the DEARS class to specifically support children who, “tend to opt out of learning as a defence mechanism”. It will enable staff to offer a range of interventions especially to, “better meet the SEMH needs of many of our children and support them to develop their own skills to regulate themselves”.



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Overview

Micklem Primary School is an average size setting with currently 222 children on roll which includes 93 Pupil Premium (PP) children, 48 English as an Additional Language (EAL) children and 61 Special Educational Needs (SEN) children. The school is situated in the middle of a large housing development in Hemel Hempstead with a mix of private and social housing. Many pupils attending the school present with additional needs such as deprived or traveller's background. The diverse ethnic and cultural groups pupils belong to enrich the school's culture and contribute to its dynamic and diversity.

The school has undergone a major change in its leadership structure by having a new Headteacher in post since September 2022, a SENDCo who is comparatively new to the school and the departure of some experienced staff including a learning mentor and an Early Years leader. These changes were the result of staff promotions or progression to new roles in new settings. However, having appointed a member of staff to the post of the Headteacher, the school benefited from the continuity of its inclusion ethos and practice, of which there are plenty of examples.

One of the striking improvements since the last assessment was the school's physical environment. The school building is "tired" and so are the outbuildings that together accommodate the school's populations. It is difficult to achieve major improvements due to how and when the school was built. Nevertheless, leadership and staff try their best to change the appearance and create a child appealing environment. An example of this is a newly transformed area that serves as a library; a space that is inviting, attractive and conducive to engaging with the books displayed.

The new leadership of the school is ambitious to continue developing the school and works very hard to find ways of providing services that are needed but difficult to obtain from the Local Authority. Many pupils, for example, in Micklem Primary School have communication skills well beneath their chronological age and are in desperate need of speech therapy. This problem is combined with a chronic shortage of Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs) and support available to schools in Hertfordshire. The current Headteacher is solving these issues by forming working relationships with other Headteachers to jointly purchase services and share between their settings. Together, the Headteachers enter co-operations to secure essential help for their pupils that they cannot afford to buy independently. With such a collaborative tactic, the pupils do not miss out on support that enables them to make better progress. Thus the school is developing a culture of greater sharing beyond their immediate setting.

Pupils of the school appreciate teachers, saying that, "learning is sharp, not repetitive". Children are clear about what is expected of them, "hard work and practising for good results" and how to achieve well. "When you are struggling, ask for help and do it again. Revisit your learning. Go to booster sessions." Pupils talked proudly about activities and a day-to-day school life conveying a sense of belonging and satisfaction of being part of this community.

The school is very well supported by parents. A meeting with parents of DEARS class pupils confirmed parental involvement and gratitude to leadership for setting up a special provision so that their children could achieve the best they are able to. Parents



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feel that they are listened to and can influence the school's decision regarding their children. The Engagement Curriculum Parent Voice survey conducted in March 2023 evidenced 100% satisfaction with the school.

In line with a current concern over pupil attendance, the school has a robust monitoring system in play and uses every possible avenue to achieve a higher figure. The DEARS class attendance data is an example of the huge effort the school made to entice children to come to school and how successful they are in achieving it. This effort is translated on to the rest of the school through different methods which involves persuading parents to do their best in making sure that their children are in school every day. A poster displayed by the main entrance illustrating, numerically, the loss of education by absences sends a clear and powerful message to parents about the importance of full attendance. As such, with regards to making school a friendly, safe and learning place for education, the leadership does everything it can in the current circumstances.

During my visit, the school demonstrated comprehensive commitment to the inclusion agenda and proved to have effective inclusive daily practice. On the basis of that, as well as extensive evidence, numerous conversations with staff and seeing a much improved physical environment, I am therefore firmly of the opinion that the school continues to fully meet the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark's Inclusive School Award 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