



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School	Five Acre Wood School Boughton Lane Maidstone Kent ME15 9QF
Head/Principal	Mrs Peggy Murphy
IQM Lead	Ms. Karen Robinson-Jones and Matthew Smith
Date of Review	22 nd November 2023
Assessor	Ms. Julia Ridley

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group	24 Carat
Ambassador	Dr. Kenny Frederick
Next Meeting	12 th March 2024
Meeting Focus	

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Spring 2022	15 th March 2022	Yes
Summer 2022	14 th June 2022	Yes
Autumn 2022	10 th October 2022	Yes
Spring 2023	13 th January 2023	Yes
Summer 2023	16 th May 2023	Yes
Autumn 2023	15 th November 2023	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group

The school has attended all of the Cluster group meetings and found them very beneficial. The first school visit this year had a discussion about wellbeing groups which is something the school is considering setting up as a Secondary club. It might also be relevant to more able children in the primary department. Some ideas about Nurture from another Cluster meeting were very similar to what the school is offering. The third Cluster group meeting was held at Five Acre Wood school with a focus on Hygge, the Curiosity approach, Forest school, Autism level up, etc. This was well received.



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Evidence

Meetings with:

- Pupils
- Parents
- Principal
- Headteacher
- Assistant Headteacher (IQM lead)
- Assistant Headteacher (behaviour)
- Assistant Headteacher (learning and teaching and assessment)
- Curriculum Approach Lead
- Fundraiser
- Family support worker

Additional Activities

- Tour of the school and grounds
- Lesson drop-ins



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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The action plan was adapted during the year as it was felt it was too specific and didn't cover all the provisions for all the children. Zones of Regulation were great for some pupils but didn't suit everyone. The school then decided to postpone the curriculum trial and move to a more comprehensive approach. By changing this focus, the school was able to make the Flagship Project even more inclusive and relevant to all learners.

As a friend of the school, Emily Rubin, the renowned international expert on Autism practices advised the school to research a new initiative called Autism Level Up. The school decided to take parts of Autism Level Up and Zones of Regulation to form their own bespoke programme. The system is based on different energy levels that have been matched to different characters which gives the pupils a reference point to begin to describe how they are feeling. Energy levels are linked to Disney characters or Pokémon characters for example. Each pupil always has the card with them as a supportive resource.

The school decided to reframe PBS and look in more detail at what pupils needed to regulate so that they would be ready for learning. They modified the school's behaviour policy and redid everyone's behaviour support plan in light of the findings, making it more reflective of the Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Transactional Support (SCERTS) approach too. Staff are now more proactive rather than reactive and have a better understanding of the role of functional analysis.

Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

The new focus for the next steps became about developing whole school systems and processes to better define the individual supports that pupils needed to engage and access their learning.

This may include the resources and curriculum developed this year but won't be limited to these. What became apparent is that rather than focusing on specific resources to support emotional regulation and engagement, the school felt they needed to take a step back and bring clarity to the universal offer that is in place for all students across the different learning approaches.

The starting point for this was to begin to look at the types of transactional and interpersonal supports that are available to pupils across the school and started to adapt pupil-centered plans to clearly articulate what needed to be in place. Through conversations with strategic leads across the school, the concept of a tiered approach to behaviour support and engagement was introduced with the decision, made to follow this PBS model. However, the important factor this year is ensuring that the strategies and proactive interventions that are in place to support emotional regulation are reflected within this model.



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- To embed the principles of nurture across the school through staff training and evaluation of current practices/culture.
- To introduce a tiered Positive Behaviour Support system where levels of support for pupils with emotional regulation needs are clearly defined.
- To introduce a tiered Mental Health and wellbeing support package where there is a clear pathway for accessing support.
- SCERTS is embedded using Person Centred Plans as a tool for supporting engagement and readiness for learning by identifying the transitional and interpersonal supports that need to be in place for each pupil.
- Staff's knowledge of how to adapt the curriculum and teaching to better suit pupils' engagement preferences starts to have an impact on incidents of challenging behaviour across the school.
- Functional behaviour analysis starts to play a bigger role in the creation of Pupil Support Plans for those children that need specific, targeted support.
- Parents are supported to understand the emotional regulation needs of their children more effectively through training opportunities provided.
- Support local and national schools with understanding and unpicking complex behaviour and proactive strategies to support engagement.



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Overview

Five Acre Wood School is one of the largest special schools in the UK with over 850 pupils. Its inclusive practices are at the heart of everything that happens at the school and feature in all decisions made by the school. The school is very welcoming to new pupils and their families.

I was delighted to hear that they have been asked to showcase their work at the IQM conference.

As one of the Assistant Headteachers said, talking about individual needs:

"The culture at Five Acre Wood is, if we can make it work, we will."

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is passionate about all the experiences and learning opportunities that they give the pupils. It was wonderful to watch a video of the children singing, "Beautiful," which got to number 13 in the YouTube charts recently!

The Woodstock 2023 Festival was a marvellous showcase for Inclusion with all the children from the school and their families having a wonderful time as they experienced the onsite Festival with its fun activities that were tailored to all individual needs. The school now has its own community radio station.

The school has been able to source real-life, transport to place around the site.

An old railway carriage has been positioned in one of the learning areas. It will become a coffee shop, open to the public, where pupils will develop hospitality skills that exactly replicate the skills and attributes that a well-known international coffee shop requires so that they will be employment-ready.

They have acquired a bus from the owner of an independent bus company which is going to be made into a specialist soft play area. The bus company will bring a functioning bus to the school so that pupils can practice the skills needed to travel on public transport.

Next academic year the school will be receiving an aeroplane to be their inclusive library as well as opening their own farm shop, "Peggy's Farm shop" with links to a local fruit packing industry.

Preparing for adulthood through vocational courses and high-quality work experiences within the school setting is an important part of the school's offer.

It was a pleasure to have a tour of the school and to meet some of the children to see all the amazing inclusive practices that are at the school. The "hygge" and "curiosity curriculum" set the right tone and emotional and cognitive level required for the younger pupils.



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Two boys from Year 9 spoke to me about how much they liked their school. They value their teachers who help them to feel safe. They spoke about a soft toy and stress ball that they were carrying, explaining how it helps them to feel better and calm themselves when they are feeling a bit anxious.

They love the on-site farm that they access weekly, talking about their horticulture course, and the animals such as the three pigs and the guinea pigs. They spoke about their varied timetable which includes shopping for ingredients at Morrisons and then shopping the next day. They make the same recipe for about 6 weeks so that they are very confident about each meal before they move to the next one. They enjoyed going to the cinema this week.

Pupil voice is very effective in the school, one example came from the Snodland satellite provision where the children asked to have one of the school's therapy dogs on their site, which was granted. Pupils spoke about how they like the choice of activities that they can do at the end of each day in choosing time, it motivates them. There are peer mentors at the Snodland site.

I spoke to two parents who said that they are eternally grateful for everything that the school offers them, describing all the staff as being magic! Both parents have children in Year 1. They spoke about how welcoming the staff was on the transition days. The staff have an amazing wealth of knowledge about Autism and trauma. One parent appreciated that her social worker was allowed to come into school to observe her child. She values the teamwork between professionals and the family.

Communication is constant between school and home and parents feel fully involved in their child's education at the school. They have a communication book that they use daily. Parent consultation evenings are useful to check progress on the Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) targets.

One parent spoke about how the school trained his family in how to use the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) with their daughter which helped their daughter communicate much more effectively which led to her starting to make meaningful utterances.

One of the family support officers spoke in depth about her team's role with families. It is wide and very varied, with the most important aspect being that of a "listening ear." They are a strong asset to the school and much appreciated by parents and families. They have an early safeguarding role as they conduct home visits and welfare calls. They are well trusted by all parents which means they can have honest conversations with families as they champion them with no judgement.

They are a link between families and the classroom staff. They have strong links with the community, delivering food parcels, and making referrals to food banks. They deliver and signpost parents to lots of workshops and courses that they think are appropriate for particular people. They run their own Christmas shop at cost so children can buy presents for their families in a familiar environment.



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The presentation on the Curriculum (Intent, Implementation, and Impact) by the Curriculum Approach Lead and Lead Mentor was very informative and described in detail the extent to which the curriculum at Five Acre Woods meets pupils' needs. It is recognised as an outstanding curriculum in feedback from Ofsted, critical friends, and other schools who visit to see and learn from the good practice.

The six learning approaches (departments) mean that all children are working at their own level with an approach such as Practical or Sensory for example, that is the right cognitive and learning style for them to make the best progress possible. Children from one of the satellite provisions, where appropriate, access mainstream lessons in one of the satellite schools.

Assessment has been refined with the recent introduction of B squared, used in conjunction with Evidence for Learning assessment. The school has run moderation sessions to ensure the evidence, internally and with other special schools. Performance management has changed with the introduction of peer observations and the use of the coaching model becoming more embedded.

Emily Rubin has supported the school with the Appreciative Enquiry approach which is valued greatly by staff. Five Acre Wood School has supported other schools with behavioural needs.

A new position of Fundraiser was established this year and the post-holder who is a former teacher at the school, is already having a significant positive impact. She spoke about all the initiatives that have been introduced such as a Walk and Talk on the last Sunday of every month with everyone welcome to the local park. It is a chance for parents to network with each other and form friendships.

The 1st charity football match to raise funds for the school was held at Maidstone Town stadium recently and was very well supported. She is also organising some joint projects with a local hospice. She makes sure that all the school sites know what is happening and they are all included.

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. Julia Ridley

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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