



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School Holy Cross Catholic Primary School
Gautby Road
Bidston
Merseyside
CH41 7DU

Head/Principal Ms Paula Brás

IQM Lead Ms Paula Brás

Date of Review 12th December 2024

Assessor Ms Siona Robson

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group All Inclusive

Ambassador Ms Sarah Linari

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2023	17 th October 2023	Yes
Spring 2024	20 th March 2024	Yes
Summer 2024	13 th June 2024	No
Autumn 2024	22 nd November 2024	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group Meetings

The meeting at Whitefield was inspiring. The head took back their work on zones of regulation, The head read the associated book and has run training for staff. This is now being rolled out across the school. They also brought back elements of their work on therapeutic classrooms particularly the hessian backed display boards. These are now in place in every classroom with the green vine surrounds and lights. Holy Cross will be visiting Whitefield to find out more about OPAL and the parent training on zones of regulation.

The second meeting was hosted by Holy Cross Primary. They shared their outstanding on attendance and how they have rolled out My Happy Minds. This day was very well received and cluster schools have been in touch to ask for support. Holy Cross is currently working with LIPA, providing advice on strategies to raise attendance. Unfortunately, due to staffing pressure they were unable to attend the meeting on the Isle of Man.



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



The most recent meeting was at Our Lady and St Philomena's. The focus was on outside play and learning, OPAL which was of real interest to Holy Cross. The head is keen to get it up and running at to support unstructured play times. They were signposted to a school in Warrington who have got this up and running which would be useful to visit. The sensory room at Our Lady and St Philomena's was impressive, really beautiful. Holy Cross is now, as a result of this meeting, going to convert half of their ICT suite into a similar inclusive space.

Evidence

- Meeting with well-being ambassadors
- Meeting with parents
- Meeting with HLTA
- Meeting with Head and Deputy
- Meeting with Family Liaison Officer
- Learning walk
- Visit to Brick Club (Lego Therapy)
- SAF report
- Curriculum Plan



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

Holy Cross has heavily invested in this programme and is seeing a huge impact in terms of the wellbeing and self-regulation of their pupils. The My Happy Minds programme was initially trialled with Year 6 as an intervention. It has then been delivered from last academic year once a week to each class across the school. The sessions start with a video clip from the My Happy Minds website, used to stimulate discussion. An HLTA who, delivered this last year with Year 5, witnessed how the pupils developed the ability to use the strategies across the week, in other lessons and in the playground. Pupils use the breathing techniques to calm down in order to create the emotional space to consider their choices. All pupils now have a better understanding of their emotions and why they feel the way they do in a situation. They are developing the self-regulation strategies to help them to respond to these emotions. Some pupils need regular reminders of these strategies whereas other pupils are able to use the complex language and strategies confidently. A new child with ADHD learnt to regulate themselves in the classroom and on the playground as a direct result of the Happy Minds sessions alongside the school ethos of positive reinforcement. I spoke to a parent with children in Year 2 and 3, both of whom have SEN needs. She told me how much they enjoyed the Happy Minds sessions and how they have impacted positively on their children's resilience and self-esteem. She told me that her child now understands their emotions and the impact of these. He is aware of how, by taking ownership of his emotions, he can now change how they impact on his day. She said, "This is massive, he was understanding how he felt more at home and realised that being sad was ok. He now realises that it is ok for boys to cry. He understands how he feels and is able to explain this to another child or adult. It also helps him to understand the emotions of other children, increasing empathy."

The pupils I spoke to were equally positive about the impact of the My Happy Minds programme. They told me, "When we do calm breathing, it helps with my anxiety." "It helped me understand why I get stressed." They told me that it creates a quiet space and helps their peers to calm down. All pupils have been given a Happy Minds journal and they told me how useful these are. They explained that they are used, "to record times when you've upset someone you didn't mean to. You record what you've done, why you've done it and how you've done it. You then draw a picture and you write how you could sort it out." "Happy Minds really helps some people understand what they have done and it helps people be calm."

The Happy Mind Ambassadors have been renamed as Well-being Ambassadors so they can cover all aspects of mental Health. This group of 12 pupils from Years 4-6 have been in place since September. They applied for the post and the school was overwhelmed by the response and the quality of the applications. I read a few of the applications the pupils submitted and there really were some golden phrases. In response to the question, Why do you think you would be a good wellbeing ambassador? One child wrote, "I love when people say I love myself, you can do anything in life, just believe it." Asked for ideas to improve well-being in the school another child wrote, "I think we could get a wellbeing pot and every gospel assembly we can pick 3 ideas to read out." Another idea was to, "Maybe have some calm colouring outside in the playground for stressed people and, mostly for little ones, some toys in a box for time out." In response to the question, why I should be an ambassador? A child simply wrote, "I'm loving,



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



caring, helpful, kind, good listener, a role model, responsible, brave and respectful." What fantastic attributes and self-esteem. The ambassadors have been trained by the primary mental health nurse. The pupils told me how much they valued this training as they said it helped them understand their role and the 4 ways to well-being. They stressed to me how important it was to always be kind, be active, be giving and respectful. They explained, "We look out for little ones, if they are sad or injured, we go over to them. If they sit on the buddy bench one of the ambassadors will go over and talk to them." They told me how they run happy breathing with their own classes and will use the breathing techniques to help other children calm down in the playground. The group have chosen their own name, Team Self-Esteem. The family liaison officer, FLO, has high expectations of this group. With little notice they rose to the challenge of running anti-bullying activities for the whole school, asking questions and generating high levels of engagement with discussion and scenario cards. They told me, "It was a good event, everyone was smiling and happy." In January, the group are running another event on well-being and getting active.

The HLTA I spoke to started delivering Lego Therapy from September with 2 small groups of 3 mixed age children for an hour a week to support their social interaction. The pupils love it, friendship bonds have developed and the pupils are more confident in and outside of the sessions. They will now initiate conversations which, prior to the therapy, they were very reticent to do. A parent of a child in Year 3 told me how their child had been avoiding school. Lego therapy has enabled him to make friends with another child who attends the sessions and his self-confidence has drastically improved. As a result of achieving success in the sessions and making friends with children from older classes, the parent emotionally told me how he now comes to school happily. I was lucky enough to speak to one group who attend Lego Therapy and later see them enjoying a session. They told me, "We build Lego sets and when the timer goes off, we swap roles of engineer, builder and supplier." Turning to her friend the child said, "You absolutely love building and I love everything." One of the groups told me, "It's helping me calm down my anxieties. It makes me feel happy." When I asked about the impact on their self-confidence, one of the pupils replied, "I feel I can do anything I want, Lego therapy has helped me control my anxiety so I can now talk to you." What a fabulous measure of impact.

Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

Team Self-Esteem will I am sure go from strength to strength over the next 12 months. The FLO plans to run regular events around well-being throughout the year with the well-being ambassadors. The next one will be on wellbeing and getting active and a future one will focus on nature. Team Self-Esteem have suggested inviting other school in for shared activities like a badminton or football tournament. A link is being established with Bidston Tennis club to co plan activities.

I suggested that the school included zones of regulation into the 24/25 Flagship project alongside Lego Therapy. The next step is to embed this strategy, ensuring that the language and approach is used consistently across the school. Some pupils were unclear as to the zones of regulation and how these are being used. As I would have expected, leaders had already identified this lack of consistency. They plan to create opportunities



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



to revisit this strategy with staff and find ways to monitor its use as part of their on-going quality assurance activities. We discussed ways in which the language around zones of regulation could be shared with parents. The link with Whitfield Primary School will be useful for this as they run an amazing training programme for parents. This could potentially be part of a flagship project for 25/26.

This academic year My happy Minds sessions are slotted in by teachers when they can, in an afternoon over the course of a week. This will, from the Spring term, be done first thing on a Monday morning. This will help with consistency and monitoring and will have the added benefit of ensuring that the children are learning ready for the week ahead. The school also plans to launch the My Happy Minds app for parents. This will start to support more consistent use of language between home and school.

The school has already actioned much of the plan for 24/25. Moving forward Lego Therapy will be developed to cover more children. The plan is to train more staff so that it can be introduced to KS1 and early years. Next steps will be to assess the impact of this provision, capturing student and parent voice. A further suggestion would be to also look at ways of measuring the impact in terms of the transferable skills which the pupils have been able to take into the classroom. Feedback from class teachers would be valuable to assess the impact on their approach to learning.



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Overview

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is in an area of extreme deprivation. There are 81% PP, putting them in the top 10% of schools nationally. SEND is double national. Children have low starting points when they start at Holy Cross and impressively go on to make outstanding progress. Last year was a particularly successful year, outcomes were 10% above national at KS2. Maths results was particularly pleasing. Speech and language is the area of highest need when children start at the school. A specialist in speech and language practitioner is employed to inform and drive staff intervention.

Holy Cross was recently awarded the amazing accolade of IQM Champion status. This is really something to celebrate. The school submitted a film around the impressive work they do with parents and the fantastically positive impact this has had.

I had the opportunity to read the school's recent SAF report. It was overwhelmingly positive and the feedback can be incorporated into a roadmap to outstanding. It recognised the work the school does to achieve an amazing 96% attendance and how they have reduced their PA figure from 40% to 16% in 3 years is very impressive. I loved the Mr Potato Head display. Each class gets a piece of him when they get 96% for a week and when he is complete, they get to enjoy a treat. It's a great and visual way to promote the importance of high attendance and setting the target at 96%, rather than 100%, means it is achievable. The school has added 100% attendance badges to their list of strategies; ½ a term is bronze, a term silver and a year of 100% attendance earns a gold badge.

The Catholic ethos is a strong thread of the school alongside careful attention given to ensuring children and families of other and no faith are fully included. The local church has closed so the school stepped in and opened its doors. Their whole school mass is now well attended by family members and local parishioners.

A new Family Liaison Officer started in March 2024. This has been a very positive appointment and the proactive and responsive approach taken is making a real difference to the families of Holy Cross. Coffee afternoons provides the opportunity for parents to build relationships. It is a space for them to link with external agencies and pick up information regarding courses and opportunities. A parent told me that they have attended an autism course, have welcomed the opportunity to connect with other parents and have the opportunity to interact and develop new skills. At the last one, parents had the opportunity to make a Christmas wreath. A range of services have already linked with parents and in the new year, Branch, a new service for SEN children will attend and a therapeutic artist will be running a 5-week silk painting course for parents. Since her appointment, the FLO has run a nurturing programme with 8 parents. Parents who attended told me, "It was really good, the tips to help with my child's behaviour at home were very helpful." "It taught us a way to communicate with our children and understand their feelings." They have found the parent nurturing book provided a useful resource to refer back to. They valued the safe space to share their experiences and now feel that they are not alone with the challenges they encounter. Three of the parents who attended the nurturing course joined other mums to attend a women's confidence and well-being course which the FLO helped facilitate. A parent who attended this told me, "This was brilliant. It gave me so much confidence, I got so



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



much from it.” Parents have valued the sleep course, the course on drugs and alcohol awareness and one on mental health awareness course, all organised by the school. The parents I spoke to were so appreciative of these opportunities and are excited about further opportunities which will be made available for them through the extensive links the school has with outside agencies. The FLO has an established link with St Vincents de Paul, a local charity, which provides families with basic needs such as beds, washing machines and sofas. It is this exceptional work with families which contributed to their IQM Champion status.

The FLO also ran Seasons of Growth sessions for a group of 5 children to support them with loss and bereavement. A parent whose child attended this told me, “My child now understands the process of grief and how the seasons pass.” The parent went on to tell me that the positive impact on his mental health and well-being has been significant. When I spoke to the child they told me, “It helped me a lot. We would talk about the people who had died and this helped. The seasons change and at the end it is Spring.” Another child finished his sentence, “everything then grows back.”

Another excellent provision in place to support families is the school's walking bus, currently supporting 10 children who have school-based avoidance and/or attachment barriers. The children have responded brilliantly, they are up and ready each morning, waiting for the 'bus.' A number of children have used the walking bus as a transition mechanism to now be able to come to school independently. This is a true measure of its success.

The Cradle to Career project has ongoing impact for the children of Holy Cross. Last summer the school was able to run a Year 5 & 6 holiday club completely funded by cradle to career. The aim of this was to support transition and equip them for Year 6 and secondary school. The children did all their own cooking, team building activities, sports and mindfulness sessions. The pupils had a very positive experience.

The school's Hub for communication and language and self-regulation, continues to be an inclusive and highly successful provision. The majority of children transfer back into class. The Head spoke proudly of a child who completed a successful transition in September back into mainstream after receiving 2 years of support in the hub. The child is now thriving in the mainstream class. If a planned phased transition has hiccups, it is reevaluated and a hybrid provision may be put into place to support any period of difficulty. The process is always completely bespoke to the child.

The development of the curriculum has been a significant focus for the school over the last year. The curriculum has undergone an in-depth review and is now sequenced coherently. The key knowledge and vocabulary are outlined for each lesson so that the teacher can focus on the method of delivery. The key terminology is covered in a pre-teach episode, so pupils have strong grounding in the tier 3 vocabulary. The changes have supported staff well-being and their non specialist subject knowledge. All units are resourced and planned, providing a solid framework for staff to build their lessons on. This approach provides support but also allows for staff autonomy. The Deputy Head has been out of class for the last 12 months to provide the opportunity for him to focus on the curriculum and ensure future units reflect the same high-quality approach. This bespoke consistent curriculum for the school has a strong local context.



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Trips are integrated into learning plans. Year 6 went to Western Approaches, a WW2 museum in Liverpool linked to their history topic. The early years forest school curriculum has been developed significantly. Nursery children now visit Bidston Hill to engage in a wider range of cooperative and independent activities, including making teepees, toasting marshmallows and den building. The Year 1 topic, 'Our local area,' is now more focused and the walk they do around the school catchment area has tighter educational outcomes. The walk is pre mapped and the human and physical geographical landmarks identified and discussed. The school has just got funding from INEOS to take pupils to Rome in September 2025, a very exciting way to enhance the History and RE curriculum.

As a result of the curriculum changes there is more variety in the tasks children complete. These are more open ended, ensuring all pupils are challenged and supported in their learning. Over the last year, leaders have done a lot of CPD on what good teaching looks like. I saw a lovely example of paired discussion as pupils prepared for an independent thinking task. Recent training on questioning has focused on cold calling as an inclusive strategy. The plan for next half term is to look at the effective use of mini whiteboards to check for understanding. The use of cold calling and mini white boards will directly support the 'we do' element of the explicit instruction which has been identified by leaders as a target improvement area.

Leaders are always looking for ways to improve the provision and experience for the pupils at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School. They reflect on best practice and advice from the local authority, their local networks of schools and from across their IQM cluster.

Last January the school made some carefully thought through changes to their behaviour policy. The school has introduced zones of regulation across the school and have embedded consistency in terms of the nonverbal signals and verbal instructions. There are now core routines across the school. The impact of these changes is that there is greater consistency across the school and this in turn will support transition through the year groups. Supporting the drive for consistency in the application of policies and procedures has been the introduction of a staff handbook in September.

To conclude this review report, I would like to share some of the lovely responses from pupils and parents when asked why a family might wish to come to Holy Cross. These reflect the highly inclusive and supportive ethos which permeates all aspects of school life.

"The school likes me."

"You will make tons more new friends."

"If you come to the school, I will defend you."

Parents could not speak more highly of the school and the support provided for their children and for themselves.



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



"The school is very supportive; they have helped me so much with my child's school avoidance and now she happily comes in every day and is a well-being ambassador."

"When my child started here, she couldn't speak or remain seated. Now she has conversations and can sit in lessons, an amazing change. I don't know how to describe it."

The resounding message from everyone I spoke to, is that school does everything they can to help the children and families at Holy Cross. If they cannot help, they will find someone who can. The school is an enabler to all who cross the threshold. Inclusion is the air that they breathe.

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 Siona Robson

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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