



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School	Homerswood Primary and Nursery School Kirklands Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire AL8 7RF
Head/Principal	Ms Mica Kettle
IQM Lead	Ms Maxine Wilson
Date of Review	29 th June 2023
Assessor	Mary Hewitson

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group	Inclusion London
Ambassador	Ms Andrea Atkinson
Next Meeting	13 th October 2023
Meeting Focus	N/A

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2022	4 th November 2023	Yes
Spring 2023	10 th March 2023	Yes
Summer 2023	9 th June 2023	No

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Cluster Group Meetings

During the school year 2022-2023 the school has been represented at two Cluster Group Meetings.

Brook House Primary School. Attendees shared information about their Flagship projects. The visit stimulated discussion (at Homerswood) about English as an Additional Language (EAL) resources and how these can best support pupils who also have speech and language difficulties. Resources for tracking pupil progress also became a useful focus. Literature references were signposted during the visit which included NASEN research led by John Hattie focussing on the effects of the recent Pandemic. Other resources that stimulated interest and discussion were the Bell Foundation, Flash Academy, Little Wandle, and Learning Village.



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Churchfields School. Attendees had a tour of the school followed by discussion about the development of inclusive practice. The assessment process used at Churchfields was also explained and discussed. The visit stimulated further discussion about the impact of the Pandemic on pupils at Homerswood. In particular, staff considered the concerns of reducing the emotional impact whilst striving to get learning 'back on track'.

Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day:

Discussions with:

- Headteacher
- Inclusion Lead
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator (SENDCo)
- Subject Lead for Science
- Subject Lead for Maths
- Subject Lead for Design Technology
- Subject Lead for Computing
- Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) with responsibility for P.E.
- Teaching Assistant for 'Drawing and Talking'
- Governor with responsibility for SEND

Additional Information

- Website
- Tour of the school (with the Headteacher and SEND Governor)
- Observation of a school assembly
- Telephone conversations (prior to and after the assessment day)

Background Information

Homerswood is a single form entry Primary School with a 26-pupil place Nursery. Most pupils transfer to the main school Reception Class and stay at Homerswood until the age of 11.

The school celebrates four simple but powerful aims which are the starting point for all learning and behaviour:

- Be confident and happy
- Be respectful and caring
- Be proactive in learning
- Achieve our full potential by having high expectations of ourselves and others

Staff are proud of the way they support pupil wellbeing and talk to them about the effect it has on relationships and learning. Working with the pupils, they have developed a common language around mental wellbeing which is displayed on notice boards around the school. High aspirations are pivotal and are developed through a carefully structured Pathways Curriculum, providing an exciting route for learning for every pupil.



Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

Raising Aspirations for Year 5 and Year 6 Pupils

The project has been a major focus for 3 years and the journey has led the school to a complete review of its aims and sense of purpose. The original aims of the project identified four key areas to address i.e.

- Improve aspirations
- Improve mindset towards education and learning
- Improve knowledge of careers
- Improve self-confidence

Whilst enrichment might originally have been a tool to expand experiences for pupils, it has now become a pivotal/non-negotiable element of the whole school curriculum. A rolling programme of resources and real-life experiences are made available to pupils, forming an essential part of teaching and learning. Staff at Homerswood Primary School have continued to consider a wide range of academic research in order to support and inform their work of raising the long-term aspirations of their pupils. The relationship between high aspirations and academic achievement is acknowledged and the school ethos expresses a strong commitment to these significant influences on future success. Pupils speak animatedly about the experiences they have enjoyed, and many are already thinking seriously about future careers. Confidence and self-esteem are high and was further illustrated by the way pupils are planning to deliver whole school assemblies.

Research carried out by the school includes reference to findings by both The Princes Trust and Primary Futures. A recent report from The Princes Trust, 'The Aspiration Gap', explains how the Coronavirus Pandemic has had a hugely negative impact on the aspirations of young people seeking employment. Many are 'abandoning their ambitions and losing hope for the future, with those from disadvantaged backgrounds being hardest hit'. Such research heightens the need to develop and maintain the aspirations of the youngest generation so that they can face an uncertain future with a positive mindset.

The 'Starting Early' report published by Primary Futures states that:

- Starting aspirations learning at primary-age is key to social mobility.
- Meeting real-life role models from the world of work increases motivation to learn and challenges stereotypes
- Disadvantaged children often benefit the most from activities.

The report also describes how 'aspiration activities' can support school improvement objectives including pupil premium strategies, raising underachievement by making links between curriculum topics. The extensive literature review carried out by senior leaders has underpinned discussion and enthused the approach to learning at many levels.

As stated, the original outline of the Homerswood project presents its key objectives. Evidence in the 'overview' section of this report shows how the original intention to



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improve 'aspirations, mindset, knowledge of careers and self-confidence' has been fully met. Staff are confident that through this project they have embedded a vibrant and exciting curriculum. They now feel ready to propose a new theme for their IQM Flagship project.

Agreed Actions for the 'next steps' in the Flagship Project 2023-2024

Senior leaders have identified a new area for their research. With a focus on Nursery pupils, they intend to investigate links between gender identification and learning opportunities chosen by children. This would also require consideration of the limitations of the learning environment and the views of parents and staff.

Ultimately, senior leaders would like the school to offer a non-binary Early Years experience. Possibilities within the proposal have been discussed (by the assessor) with IQM and it is agreed that the detail of the proposal will be clarified over the next few months and that the school will submit its new plan early in the Autumn Term.

Overview

The recent appointment of a Headteacher, who was promoted from her role as the Deputy at Homerswood, has led to a very smooth and successful leadership transition. In her earlier role she contributed to the development of a unique, totally child-centred, curriculum which is so well established that it now expresses the aims and identity of the school. Her relationship with the staff and pupils is open and relaxed, at the same time reflecting her professional status as a strong leader. The senior leaders who planned and led the IQM assessment day demonstrated the same passion for the inclusion of every member of the school community. They recognise that the original Flagship research project has helped them identify, plan, and embed a unique curriculum. Because this is so well established, it presents a secure example of how a shared belief in developing the aspirations of pupils has become a driving force for learning. They now feel ready to embark on a new focus for Flagship research and have identified the area they wish to investigate and develop as outlined in the research plan for the coming year 2023-2024.

Whilst covering all National Curriculum aims and objectives, learning at Homerswood is based on a strong belief in the development of aspirational thinking in the pupils. Minds are opened to the many opportunities and experiences that can be considered for the future, at the same time acknowledging that choice is increased when it is coupled with academic success. Helping pupils develop self-confidence and belief in the possibilities for their future are key factors and all staff are committed to these values.

The assessment day started with the tradition of a whole school assembly which was innovative in that it demonstrated a new initiative suggested by the pupils themselves. Some weeks previously a pupil had asked if he and a small group of friends could lead the whole school assembly. Their chosen theme was 'Philosophy' which demonstrated the pupils' tenacity and communication skills. This was followed by requests from many other pupils who also wish to lead assemblies. Senior staff are now planning a timetable as so many have offered to demonstrate their knowledge and presentation skills. On the day of my visit a group of three Year 5 pupils confidently presented a whole school



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assembly based on 'Psychology'. They explained what the word means and used a model of the human brain to describe the areas that govern thinking and actions. They also presented a short power-point to demonstrate how the brain separates real and imagined images. Their whole school audience of pupils and staff were enthralled by the presentation and teachers now face the challenge of finding enough assembly opportunities for all to share their learning.

A tour of the learning environment demonstrated the school in action and the many displays and resources that support learning. An agreed approach to subdue intense colour schemes in both décor and wall mounted teaching aids is a response to the needs of many pupils who experience sensory overload. Research evidence informs teachers of the sensitivity of many pupils especially those with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Bright colours are being reduced with display boards being covered with hessian rather than colourful backing paper. The newly appointed SEND Governor joined us on the tour and was also impressed by the excellent learning behaviour of the pupils.

Teachers have developed an exciting Pathways Curriculum which incorporates all national expectations and presents them within the real-world context of working people. It is underpinned by the concepts of respect, aspiration, curiosity, kindness, and resilience. Progressive experiences and opportunities are planned to allow children to be exposed to diverse communities, dynamics, and individuals. Developing Experts is one chosen resource which allows scope for teachers to use their own innovative ideas in response to pupils' learning. Embedded within the teaching is information about how the topic being investigated is relevant to specific careers and in this way, aspirations are developed and explored. Resources from the Primary Science Trust also provide excellent teaching tools; one set of posters on display featured photos of a 'real life' experts followed by child-friendly job descriptions presented in a question-and-answer format. For example, an Embryologist answered imagined questions such as:

- What do I do?
- Where do I work?
- What did I like doing at school?
- What do I do in my spare time?
- How do I make the world a better place?
- What are the challenges I have faced?

If you want to be an Embryologist, you need to be:

- a kind person
- enjoy being 'hands on'
- interested in scientific equipment
- curious and ask questions

STEM learning explores the links and overlaps between Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths and during National Science Week in March and beyond, these connections have been explored. The teachers who lead these areas of learning work together to ensure they provide stimulating and enjoyable experiences for the children. They are not restricted by subject demarcation but instead have established an exciting curriculum



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delivering STEM subjects. Pupils from Years 5 and 6 have enjoyed learning sessions led by STEM Ambassadors and included a guide dog trainer, a female engineer working with aircraft and a radio technologist. The skills of parents of pupils in the school have also been utilised and have included sessions led by an Investigating Police Officer, a Physicist and a Researcher who worked in the Amazon Rainforest.

Teachers have noticed the growing insight of pupils who initially may have had somewhat predictable aspirations for the future – to be a footballer, U-tuber etc. Over time their aspirations have matured, and many pupils are now thinking more insightfully about the future and what it may offer.

For the third year in succession pupils in Year 5 have entered a young Chef of the Year competition. From the original 10 competitors who designed a menu and then prepared, cooked, and served the meal to the staff, two pupils have been selected for the final by Master Chef Harry Lomas. This project has been a powerful experience for all involved, developing co-operation and support as well as a creative approach to food preparation and cooking. Pupils have practised their cooking at home and on the day of the final competition will have just two hours to prepare and cook a three-course meal.

Pupils have met a variety of professionals via webinars including a palaeontologist and were able to submit questions about careers and interests. They have worked with architects who visited the school to lead a workshop involving pupils in the creation of a model town. Similarly, pupils learnt about life in the Marines when a female Cadet gave a presentation about her career experiences. Year 6 pupils were thrilled by a visit to the Law Courts at the University of Hertfordshire where they became the jury and witnessed an enactment of a trial.

Votes for Schools is a highly valued activity which 'gives young people the chance to speak out and be heard on issues that matter to them'. It is an on-line discussion forum that develops critical thinking, oracy, and confidence by covering issues such as Prevent, British Values and many aspects of the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural curriculum (SMSC). The opinions of pupils are collated via the on-line platform so that they can consider their views alongside those of other participants who may have joined the virtual debate from other settings. The resource supports personal development and encourages discussion at home as themes are shared via the school website. Some of the more recent topics have included 'International Women's Day', 'Politics' and 'Scientific Discoveries'.

All of these well-planned experiences have enhanced learning and helped develop truly aspirational young people. Staff are realistic and remind pupils of the challenges involved in establishing a career and the need to be flexible because of possible limitations imposed by the unknown labour market. However, the enthusiasm of pupils to hold onto their vision for the future is real; they talked enthusiastically about the different career paths they are considering. They shared information about their Pathway Pads' which record a number of activities that they will experience during their final year in the school. For example, during Year 6 pupils will:

- plan a journey
- use public transport



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- listen to an orchestra
- swim 25 metres
- visit a court house
- spend a week away from the family

The school is fortunate to have an extremely competent curriculum leader for all aspects of Computer Science. The subject impacts on all curriculum areas and in particular has strong links with the STEM subjects by providing insight into many areas of learning. Pupils are taught “the principles of information and computation, how digital systems work, and how to put this knowledge to use through programming.” Homerswood has invested heavily in resources with every pupil having easy access to a chrome book, including those in Early Years and those attending the After School Club. Pupils have access to ‘Clicker’ and parents can use this resource with their children at home. Scanning pens have been purchased and the application ‘Photo Text’ has been made available. The ever-changing and developing digital world presents challenges. However, excellent management of the subject means that pupils are taught to respond to change by using their natural curiosity and resilience. Senior leaders believe that “it is imperative that pupils understand the positive and negative effects that using technology has on individuals, local communities, national communities and the wider world and how they can play their part in this”.

Physical Education (PE) opportunities are led and inspired by the enthusiasm of the Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) who manages the subject. She ensures that an exceptionally wide range of PE experiences are made available, and all pupils are encouraged to participate and enjoy the PE on offer. Many resources are made available during playtimes and qualities such as patience, perseverance, turn-taking, and self-confidence can be seen to be developing in the children. Very strong links with the nearby Secondary school have been established and staff from that setting are greatly appreciated for the experiences they offer to the primary school pupils. Pupils from Homerswood frequently visit the secondary school to participate in sporting activities and through this partnership an event entitled ‘This Girl Can’ gave female primary pupils the opportunity to participate in activities that sometimes have a gender bias towards males. Curling, speed stacking, hockey and cricket are just some of the activities made available by the secondary school links.

The professional Gymnast Steve Threw spent a day in the school encouraging the participation of all by sharing his sporting achievements. On many occasions he has represented Scotland and Great Britain at various international gymnastics competitions. At the age of 28 he won the gold medal in the men’s ‘rings’ event in the 2002 Commonwealth Games. He inspired pupils by sharing his achievements providing a further example of the cross-curricular Pathways approach to developing aspirations. The development of the leadership skills of the older pupils is a current focus as they learn to guide younger pupils embarking on specific lunch-time sporting activities. Whilst this is a new initiative, pupils in Year 5 and 6 are steadily growing in confidence and developing their leadership skills.

A Teaching Assistant (TA) supporting children with additional needs has qualified as a Drawing and Talking Therapist and when appropriate is able to use her skills to support pupils who might benefit from this intervention. Drawing and Talking helps children discover and express emotions in a non-directed way through a simple, pupil-centred



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approach. Whilst she appreciates the importance of all her work with children, she particularly enjoys this one-to-one activity and demonstrated this non-threatening but effective strategy. Typically, when children draw from their imagination, they often depict thoughts, feelings and worries through familiar images. The role of the therapist (in this case the trained teaching assistant) is to gently encourage the child to talk about their drawing whilst the role of the adult is to listen. The SENDCo and other experienced practitioners are always available to discuss outcomes as appropriate.

As already stated, the unique Pathways Curriculum is firmly established and is rooted in the belief that aspiration, confidence, and focused achievement are essential qualities for pupils in the school. The sense of ownership of these ideals is tangible not only through the commitment of the staff, but the pupils themselves, who enjoy so many practical experiences. All that has been achieved will continue to grow and develop and staff now feel ready to take on a new focus for their Flagship journey. The vision of senior leadership will once again be coupled with practical action and aspiration.

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: Mary Hewitson

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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