



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School Homerswood Primary & Nursery School
Kirklands
Welwyn Garden City
Hertfordshire
AL8 7RF

Head/Principal Miss Mica Kettle

IQM Lead Mrs Maxine Wilson

Date of Review 26th June 2025

Assessor Mrs Aimee Jones

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group North London Cluster

Ambassador Kenny Frederick

Next Meeting

Meeting Focus

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2023	13 th October 2023	Yes
Spring 2024	5 th March 2024	Yes
Summer 2024	14 th June 2023	No
Autumn 2024	22 nd November 2024	Yes
Spring 2025	5 th March 2025	Yes
Summer 2025	13 th June 2025	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group

During the school year 2024 – 2025, the school has been represented at all 3 cluster meetings.

Willowbrook Primary School: Attendees explored ways to maximise the impact of outdoor learning spaces and school displays, considering how these environments can further support inclusive practice. They also engaged with the Inclusion Matrix—an effective tool for supporting wellbeing and managing workload within the inclusion team. Staff at Homerswood used the session to reflect on how responsibilities are



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distributed across the school, reinforcing the shared ownership of SEND provision. The visit also provided a valuable opportunity for informal cross-school moderation, where Homerswood staff celebrated pupil outcomes and noted how, despite what appeared to be a difference in available resources, both settings were able to achieve the same high-quality results.

The Hyde School: Attendees explored the internally developed Hub provision, gaining valuable insights into why some schools choose to establish such specialised support and the practical considerations involved in setting it up. The visit deepened Homerswood staff's understanding of the purpose and implementation of tailored provisions within a mainstream setting.

Ronald Openshaw Nursery Centre: The focus of this visit was on Early Years curriculum development, with a particular emphasis on a Music Therapy approach. Inspired by this, Homerswood staff invested in a music therapist to support a targeted group of pupils for the remainder of the academic year. This initiative has had a significant impact, leading to a wider recognition of music therapy as a valuable tool, and prompting further exploration of how it can be integrated more broadly across the school. In addition, the emphasis placed on high-quality adult interactions prompted reflection at Homerswood on staff training around language and engagement. As a result, there has been a renewed focus on how adults can effectively play with, model for, and scaffold learning for young pupils.

Evidence

During the assessment day, I met with the:

- Inclusion Manager (INCo)
- Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)
- Senior Leadership Team (SLT): Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher
- Year 6 Pupil Leaders
- Support Staff working within the Reflection Room
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Teachers
- Special Educational Needs (SEND) Governor

Additional Activities

- IQM Flagship Review Documentation
- Tour and learning walk of the school
- Pupil voice
- Ofsted Report 2024
- School website and newsletters
- School social media platforms
- Displays and school environment



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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

To implement an inclusive approach to Early Years education by reviewing practice to offer a non-gender stereotypical experience for our pupils.

This year, the school has focused on identifying and addressing unintentional gender bias within the environment, curriculum, and daily routines. Their approach centres on early intervention within the school community to create lasting, meaningful change in several key areas.

Staff have been supporting each other to notice and correct unintentional gender bias in their language. For example, by actively considering this, staff noticed that they often commented on girls' hairstyles more than boys and have now taken steps to address this. They also reflected on the use of language such as 'good' and 'clever boy / girl' and are now moving to using gender-neutral language that focuses on praising specific behaviours, rather than gender. One staff member identified that the Headteacher is an advocate for language, by prompting staff to further consider the words they are using and elaborate on their intention with phrases such as 'what do you mean by that?'

A book audit in EYFS assessed whether stories reinforced gender stereotypes, ensuring balanced representation of boys and girls, men and women. Similarly, toys have been reviewed to offer a broad range without limiting choices based on gender. Staff recognise that achieving full neutrality is challenging, but awareness is the first step toward change.

Early Years teachers have collaborated with subject leaders, especially in humanities, to ensure books and materials fairly represent both genders. In STEM subjects like science, representation of men and women is strong. However, in Art, male artists were often featured more frequently, so steps have been taken to include more female artists. The school also challenges stereotypes by inviting diverse visitors such as a female farmer, a female Paralympian, and a female scientist. They are acutely aware that gender stereotypes can limit children, and ensure they do everything they can to avoid sending messages about what is or is not appropriate for boys and girls.

Recognising the power of music to break down barriers for pupils, the Music lead audited the school choir, identifying that the majority of pupils attending were female. To address this, the school has partnered with a local boys' choir and encourages pupils to choose songs that avoid reinforcing stereotypes. Even at the Lower Key Stage Two 'Spring Soiree,' song choices are carefully reviewed to prevent subliminal gender bias.

Staff take pride in challenging traditional stereotypes while maintaining balance, being mindful not to overrepresent one gender. They also acknowledge that focusing on gender opens broader conversations about diversity, culture, and religion, highlighting the many areas requiring ongoing attention. What is incredibly refreshing at Homerswood, is the amount that staff are willing to learn and educate themselves, in order to support the children. They are aware that this project is ongoing, and that the change they are trying to make will take time. But they are committed to making small, daily changes, that will without a doubt have a significant impact.



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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

Homerswood will continue to highlight and develop their community's awareness of unintentional bias. They will do this through acknowledging the active steps they are taking within Early Years to promote gender equality, and the reasons behind why this is so important. They will further explore ways of promoting change and developing a framework that will, over a period of time, be reflected within their whole school community. The impact of this will be improved confidence and awareness of unconscious gender bias within the school community.

Planned actions will include, but will not be limited to:

Continuation of the Early Years Curriculum Review

- Re-evaluate literary materials and singing/song choices with a focus on inclusivity, specifically considering gender neutral opportunities where possible.
- Continue to consider musical input across the school.
- Subscribe to *Sonshine* magazine (focused on raising boys for a more equal world) and monitor its impact.
- Ensure representation of all cultures and genders in resources.

To improve gender neutral and inclusive language amongst staff, pupils and community.

- Complete a self-evaluation of gender equality in the Early Years (and wider school if appropriate).
- Introduce and embed gender-neutral language through whole-school CPD, delivered via the *Lifting Limits* INSET Day.
- Raise awareness of the school's work on gender-neutral language within the local community.

Supporting Boys' Emotional Understanding in Key Stage Two

- Deliver a pilot series of lessons targeted at boys, focusing on healthy emotional expression, standing up against inequality and bullying, and breaking stereotypes, through the RSHE curriculum.
- Access the second phase of the pilot scheme in Autumn Term 2025.

Senior Leadership Team Project Expansion

- Explore participation in the Gender Equalities Schools Programme, including whole staff training.
- Allocate time for the Inclusion Team to research additional opportunities.
- Further develop subject-specific curricula (e.g., geography and history) guided by the principle: "If you are not shown it, how do you know it exists?"



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Overview

On arrival at Homerswood Primary School, you immediately feel welcome—from staff, pupils, and Buzz the therapy dog. Inclusion is central to the school's ethos, driven by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), who ensure that they advocate for every single one of their pupils to receive an education that is exactly right for them.

Although relatively newly formed, the Senior Leadership Team, alongside the Inclusion Manager, deeply understand pupil needs at individual, class, and whole-school level. They approach their work with careful planning, ensuring it is always underpinned using evidence-based research and expert advice, which becomes the driver for all staff – they understand why decisions are being made and how they will benefit the children. At Homerswood, every decision that is made is supported by a clear rationale and is purposeful: lights are switched off to help pupils stay calm; hessian backgrounds on display boards reduce overstimulation; and air conditioning in Reception supports younger pupils' self-regulation.

The Inclusion Team, consisting of the SENCo and Inclusion Manager, are a visible presence across the school. They are well known to the children, staff, and parents, and ensure that inclusion is a high priority on everyone's agenda. The recent appointment of the Deputy Headteacher, who leads on Pupil Premium, has further strengthened the school Inclusion Offer. She has worked to create detailed One Page Profiles for those children in receipt of pupil premium, ensuring that all staff have a thorough overview of potential barriers to learning for all pupils within their class. Pupil voice is central to these documents, so that there is a thorough and holistic view of the child. An additional layer of inclusion support comes from the Inclusion Link Governor, who has an extensive background in supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). She comments on the supportive provision that is provided to all staff, identifying that "it's not only about working with the children, but about how everyone in the staff can be involved and know about what we are doing."

A consistent theme is the intentionality behind every interaction. Several pupils have been approved for specialist placements by the local authority but are still awaiting placement. Despite this, staff creatively ensure no learning time is lost for these individuals, providing each pupil with a tailored curriculum. For instance, two pupils with intensive needs receive weekly music therapy funded by the school. This forward-thinking approach has led the school to develop its own purpose-built additional provision, launching in September, to better meet pupils' needs. The decision was carefully informed by extensive research, evidence-based practice, and support from IQM cluster networks. Committed to their community, the school sought advice from local schools to guide their choices, building confidence in their plans. They have been transparent with parents, acknowledging this is a work in progress and inviting their input to foster a sense of ownership and ensure comfort with the new provision.

Homerswood encourages pupils to be themselves, aim high, and believe they can achieve anything. Positive affirmations are visible throughout the school, including the assembly mantra: "You be you, because you are amazing." From the start, pupils follow an Enrichment Pathway of activities, including three overnight stays during their school journey. A Year 6 pupil noted, "this is to help prepare our parents as well as us!" These



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experiences are age-appropriate and curriculum-linked, such as Reception children visiting the library and Year 3 children swimming 25 metres.

Every classroom features a “Celebrating Us” board where children can display their work, building a portfolio they can reflect on and be proud of by the end of the year. Teachers tailor these displays to suit each year group. Events like “Cultural Heritage Day” foster community, with families sharing dishes and pupils dressing in heritage from their home countries. An Early Years Teacher recalled a non-speaking pupil, usually shy in groups, confidently performing a dance in traditional dress— allowing herself to be in the moment and display confidence in a way that staff had not seen before. The staff’s relentless commitment to building pupils’ confidence and providing diverse experiences inspires children to set ambitious goals. For example, one pupil when asked said she aspires to be a marine biologist, while another aims to become a forensic lawyer.

At Homerswood, the child’s voice is central to everything—not just through formal channels, but in daily conversations between staff and pupils. For example, when a child asked the Headteacher if she could lead an assembly on philosophy, it sparked a program that now sees pupils collaborate with professionals to deliver assemblies, sharing their passions and demonstrating that their ambitions are achievable. This pupil was not only able to share her love of philosophy with the whole school, including donating books to every class, but also now knows that her opinions and contributions are important to her community.

Pupil Leaders play a key role in the school community, greeting visitors, giving tours, and leading Friday assemblies. Becoming a Pupil Leader involves a rigorous process led by the current Year 6 leaders, including an application, interview, and decision meeting. With twice as many applicants as available spots, the Pupil Leaders showed great maturity by being mindful of disappointed candidates, and the school ensure everyone who applies is offered alternative roles like Sports, Music, or French Leader, so that they still have those leadership experiences.

Pupils take great pride in being part of Homerswood and speak enthusiastically about their school experiences. They recall with pride not only memorable moments but also learning across all subjects—for example, one pupil excitedly described creating a fact board in English, while another shared how they practiced earthquake drills by hiding under tables in Geography. During my visit, Year 6 were engaged in ‘Enterprise Week,’ a child-led project where they worked together to create, market, and sell handmade goods. They made a profit on the first day, proud to have earned back their initial investment!

Pupils speak highly of the staff, knowing they are there to support them. When asked about the weekly “staff star of the week” award chosen by pupils, one child said, “It’s really hard to choose because all our staff always go above and beyond!” This admiration extends beyond teachers and across all staff, regardless of role; for example, when asked about the best part of school, one pupil replied, “Our school cook is the best – especially her chicken pie!”



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Staff at Homerswood are proud to be part of the school. One staff member highlighted how mindful everyone is of compassion fatigue for those staff supporting pupils with an intensive level of need, noting that when challenges arise, staff adapt quickly and support each other. Another emphasized the school's culture as an open forum where everyone respects one another and tackles difficult conversations openly. They also highlighted the importance of fostering understanding among pupils without additional needs, saying, "the more inclusive we get all pupils to think now, the better. If we want societal change, we need to start now. Every child matters."

From the start, parents are welcomed as part of the Homerswood community, with staff supporting both children and adults. At the initial "new to school" meetings, the family support worker tells parents, "I am here for you – I am your person." This partnership is reinforced daily through classroom family boards displaying each child's photo, reminding pupils their families are with them on their journey. Staff also extend support to home—for example, regulation tools used in Early Years are often sent home so parents can reinforce strategies consistently.

Pupils at Homerswood start with strong foundations that prepare them for a successful school journey. From the outset, children and families are well known to staff, supported by a thorough transition plan. Staff have carefully audited the environment, prioritising natural materials for play, and ensuring every activity and piece of equipment has a clear purpose. A Year 6 Leader captured EYFS perfectly, saying, "Nursery is definitely all about discovering!" Each Reception child is carefully paired with a Year 6 "buddy," with thoughtful matching to foster genuine relationships. Buddies share lunches, read together regularly, and build meaningful, two-way friendships. One Year 6 pupil clearly described her buddy's individual learning needs and how she had helped support these throughout the year. Parents noted that many Year 6 buddies stay in touch even after moving to secondary school, reflecting the depth of these connections.

These strong foundations continue to grow as children progress through the school. Each afternoon, a dedicated adult meets with every pupil in the key stage on a rota basis to focus on the English curriculum through targeted discussions. Together, they reflect on progress, celebrate successes, and set personalised learning goals. Pupils are encouraged to identify next steps and areas for improvement, supporting self-reflection and self-correction. This dedicated time has fostered both academic progress and positive attitudes towards learning.

The school is committed to breaking down stereotypes and ensuring the curriculum and school day reflect every child. Using initiatives like "Votes for Schools", pupils across all year groups engage weekly with current-affairs questions. These discussions promote British Values, empower pupils to share their views, and connect their votes with local and national results. This approach helps children appreciate the importance of their opinions and prepares them for active participation in democracy, while deepening their understanding of themselves, others, and the wider world.

As part of its therapeutic approach to behaviour, the school has created a "Reflection Room", now in its second year. Available at lunchtimes for pupils struggling during unstructured times, trained staff lead restorative conversations to help children resolve incidents thoughtfully. Using guided questions like "Where did it go wrong?" and "What



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could we do differently?”, pupils reflect on their choices. All sessions are logged, and parents are kept informed through direct conversations and tailored resources to support reflection at home. Regular staff meetings review behaviour patterns, enabling early intervention and targeted support. This has led to a clear reduction in playground incidents.

Staff at Homerswood are deeply reflective and wholly dedicated to ensuring every pupil receives the very best education. Homerswood is a school that advocates for every single one of their pupils, ensuring they get an education that is tailored to their individual need(s). Even with only two weeks left in the academic year, one teacher remarked, “There’s still so much learning we can do.” This relentless commitment means staff never settle; they continually strive to provide the highest quality support and preparation for their pupils’ futures. As a result, children leave Homerswood equipped not only with strong academic skills but also as confident, compassionate individuals who understand, embrace, and celebrate diversity.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Homerswood for the warm and genuine welcome I received during my visit, and for the open, honest, and highly reflective conversations we had. From the moment I arrived, it was clear that this is a school where relationships, care, and a deep-rooted commitment to inclusion are at the heart of everything. It was an absolute privilege to meet such passionate practitioners, whose dedication to ensuring the success of every child was evident in every conversation, classroom, and corridor. Their willingness to continually evaluate and adapt their approach – always with the needs of their pupils at the centre – is truly heart-warming. The team at Homerswood demonstrate a genuine belief in each young person’s potential and work tirelessly to ensure they are nurtured, challenged, and celebrated throughout their school journey.

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: Mrs Aimee Jones

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd