



# Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd

22<sup>nd</sup> July 2016

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**Date of Centre of Excellence Review – Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

## Summary

Polegate School continues to go from strength to strength, as it continues its highly effective improvement journey. The staff are dedicated, hardworking, caring and professional. They are led by, the much respected, Headteacher and SLT who have inclusive principles at the heart of their vision for the school. There is an upward trend in relation to results, and the school was in the top 1% nationally in 2015, for pupil progress. The school last had an Ofsted inspection in 2014 where it received a “Good” overall. It did however achieve an “Outstanding” grade for the categories of Leadership, and Behaviour and Safety of the pupils. Since then the school has continued to aspire towards meeting the Ofsted “Outstanding” criteria, and indeed has been described as outstanding by the East Sussex Local Authority in their monitoring of the school, and their scrutiny of the Key Stage 1 and 2 data, which are above National Averages, in the main.

The school, previously of average size, is growing to accommodate local fluctuations and as such will take an additional reception class in September. The number of SEND pupils is slightly above average, and the catchment area serves mainly White British families. The number of pupils who are classified as Pupil Premium is broadly in line with national averages. Children enter reception with a wide range of needs, with some children at, and some children below typical levels of development for their age. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, narrows as they progress through the school.

A strong feature of the school is its commitment to high quality inclusive teaching, which impacts positively on the progress of all groups of children. The school have made the decision to give the children maximum flexibility within their classes, so groupings are fluid. In this respect pupils can access the curriculum with equality, and without being labelled. This builds confidence and self-esteem, since it is supplemented by focused support.

Cycles of target setting, analysis, evaluation and review continue to be refined, and are of extremely high quality. There are high expectations for each of the children, which are reflected in the goals set. The school continues to display a level of openness, honesty and



## Centre of Excellence Review



reflection, that serves to provide a foundation for action research, which leads to improved provision for the children. There are high levels of professional dialogue between colleagues, which both challenges and supports, leading to improved quality of teaching. Most of the teaching in the school is at the very least “good”, with increasing percentages of outstanding teaching. Coaching and mentoring has been used to extremely good effect, in order to disseminate exemplary practice and to raise expectations.

Despite the emphasis on the improvement of children’s basic skills, Polegate continues to deliver a broad and exciting curriculum, which engages all groups of children. The staff have implemented the new National curriculum and have risen to the challenge of the “raised bar”. The staff used the opportunity to review its blocks of learning, and to ensure that the children receive a stimulating range of experiences. A science week, for example, has recently taken place, which was a whole school initiative to promote the testing of hypotheses, collaboration, and exploring the outdoors. Also Sports’ weeks take place, attended by sports leaders from other schools to provide a breadth of sports competitions and challenge, and the mastery of skills which is a feature of the revised curriculum. The year 6 also have benefitted from a trip to France, which was thoroughly enjoyed by the children, giving them an educational and very memorable experience. The staff “go that extra mile” for the children, which is very much appreciated by the school community.

Thought has been given by the school, to the way in which it can support the children’s aspirations for the future, hence “From Polegate and Beyond” week was created! This was a week dedicated to careers and raising the aspirations of children and was designed to provide insight into a range of career paths. During the week, the school was visited by a range of different professions, including vets, nurses, bankers, businessmen and women. The children engaged in discussion and were able to ask questions and join focused workshops. This special and innovative week also included the school linking with the Virgin Money Fiver Challenge. Classes were given five pounds as a starting sum and the challenge was to increase it, using entrepreneurial activities. One class made “mocktails”, lollies and fruit kebabs, which gave them a profit of nearly two hundred pounds. Such opportunities for enterprise, demonstrate that the school is mindful of the development life skills. The children gained great enjoyment from the week, which was skilfully and thoughtfully organised by the staff.

I am therefore able to recommend that Polegate School be reaccredited in relation to its IQM Centre of Excellence status, as they continue to fully meet the criteria relating to inclusive practice. My thanks go to staff and children for their hospitality: it was a pleasure to spend a day in the school again during the IQM assessment.

**Assessor: Anita Watts**

**Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:**

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

### **COE 1 Demonstrable plans to sustain and develop inclusive practice.**

#### **Strengths**

- The school continues to be a highly reflective organisation, with a rigorous approach to continual improvement. There is a clear understanding of performance data, as ongoing analysis is detailed and frequent, leading to precise action planning which impacts positively on the progress of all groups of children.
- Thought is given and appropriate plans are made annually, to ensure that there is understanding within the community of children's barriers to learning. In this respect the school has carried out an awareness-raising week for Autism and workshops have also been arranged to both support the parents of children with dyslexia, and to provide additional staff training.
- Planning for transition across the school is excellent. Not only does the school recognise the importance of preparing the children for when they leave for admission to secondary education, but also supports the children as they move from class to class. This is particularly the case as they move from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 within the school. In addition, the creation of "Foundation Village" effectively prepares the children and their parents between the Nursery and Foundation stage. In all aspects of transition, vulnerable children are at the forefront and support is tailored for their individual needs.
- Polegate has continued to develop specialist roles to support the achievement and attainment of specific groups. In this respect, the "Pupil Premium Champion" monitors the progress of targeted children and plans support accordingly. The school also engages with outside agencies to plan support programmes for specific groups of children, for example Gypsy Roma/ Traveller families. The school work in close co-operation and are very much respected by the agency, for their inclusive approach. In recent months, the school hosted an exhibition of "Traveller Culture", in conjunction with the agency. This enabled the children to gain insight and develop empathy and understanding.
- Pupil Progress meetings are focused upon the identification of children who run the risk of failing to meet the targets set. The meetings involve a team, which includes the Leadership Team, Class Teachers, SENCO, Pupil Premium Champion and Governors. This ensures that there are high levels of professional dialogue, sharing knowledge and responsibility. Plans are then implemented for particular children, which involve a range of interventions.
- All layers of staff are clear about the school's main priorities. They are determined to create the best possible provision for the children, and to ensure that the school's extremely successful improvement journey continues. The school aspires to achieve the "Outstanding" grade in the next Ofsted, and has now

been categorised as such, by East Sussex Local Authority. The School Improvement Plan reflects this aim, and the SLT have ensured that priorities identified are continually monitored. A comprehensive cycle of INSET continues to take place, which takes a variety of forms as appropriate and includes training days, workshops, weekly staff meetings, coaching and mentoring and ongoing informal feedback.

- The Headteacher’s vision for the school continues to provide an inspiration for the whole school community. She firmly believes that all children deserve the best, and that barriers can and should be broken down. The staff speak very highly of her commitment and that of the senior team, who all share the same determination. This in turn has ensured that all members of the team are motivated, and the school has an extremely professional, vibrant and industrious atmosphere. Inclusion therefore, continues to be a firmly held belief, from which all action research and planning takes place.
- The monitoring of inclusive practice continues to be planned for and includes both formal and informal processes. Regular lesson observations take place from SLT and subject leaders, along with the scrutiny of books and analysis of progress data. This is supplemented by informal “drop ins” and “Blink Tests” which provide a “snapshot”.
- The school’s current priorities are to narrow the gap between disadvantaged groups and their peers and to also continue to increase the percentage of children who attain above age related expectations. The focus has been upon the continued development of Reading and Writing, with intense and detailed action planning impacting positively on results. The school therefore has an upward trend in results at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2, and the progress made by pupils is significantly above average.
- In relation to writing, which was a focus for target setting at the last IQM review, the school has planned for the continued clarification of success criteria and for providing children with clear guidance on how to improve their work. Children now also show greater confidence in relation to the editing of their work, and independently use dictionaries and thesauruses. They respond to marking comments and enter into dialogue with their teachers.
- In the vast majority of classes, working walls give good examples of modelled writing, which children can use to scaffold their own work. “Enable Tables” are another source of support, which can be wheeled alongside a particular child’s desk. This contains a range of resources to help them if they need additional guidance, such as word banks and sound maps.
- The school has planned for greater of opportunities in relation to writing. Subject managers have advised class teachers accordingly, in relation to opportunities for writing within their own subject. In science for example, reports and conclusions from investigations are written within the literacy lessons, allowing

children to focus upon their writing targets. The children also have Writing Journals, which enable them to practice their skills at home, thus involving their families.

### **COE 1 – Areas for Development**

- To continue to ensure that success criteria is clearly understood by the children, as they don't always understand what is expected of them, in order to achieve the outcome for a session or a block of work in writing.
- To continue to develop strategies which exemplify the success criteria. This could include using visualisers more often, to showcase children's work, in cases where the success criteria had been met. Similarly, teachers could plan for more opportunities for children to gain insight from their peers, in relation to the specific characteristics of their next 'level', by scrutinising each other's writing. Such collaboration may enable them to understand which elements were missing in their own work, when they compared with the work of another child as exemplification.
- To ensure that the success criteria is in child friendly language or has been explained in a way that children can always understand it.
- To have greater consistency in the use of working walls. In best practice in the school, the success criteria is always modelled, and includes examples of children's work.

### **COE 2 – Mechanisms to share good practice across schools**

#### **Strengths**

- The Head teacher is a LLE (Local Leader of Education) and as such shares her experience and strategies, which have led to the successful improvement journey, at Polegate.
- There have been a number of visits from other school interested in developing Lego Therapy in their own setting. Some schools have made further visits, to explore how Polegate staff have extended this intervention to ensure progression.
- The Pupil Premium Champion and the SENCO were invited to make a presentation at the East Sussex Inclusion Conference showing good practice with Vulnerable Pupils.
- The SENCO is a Thrive practitioner and as such shares resources and enters into professional dialogue at network meetings. Polegate has a variety of children on the 1:1 programmes and two more members of staff are developing Thrive within the school.
- The Maths Hub has continued to develop ideas and good practice between local schools.
- Pupil Premium network meetings share good practice between local schools, of which Polegate School is a member. This looks at local issues and explores solutions. Polegate hosted the first meeting this year, which was attended by 17 schools.

### **COE 2 – Areas for development**

- To explore opportunities outside the locality to link with schools who are at a similar stage of development.
- To investigate opportunities to visit schools who have had experience over a long period of improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups, such as those in the Hackney Local Authority, which now has a structured approach to disseminating the good practice prevalent in its schools.

### COE 3 – Classroom activities which explore inclusive practice.

#### Strengths

- The school continues to place emphasis on high quality inclusive teaching. The staff continue to embed mixed ability teaching, which gives all children access to the learning. Groupings are flexible which gives all children the chance to succeed and make progress, realising their full potential.
- Highly creative curriculum themes engage the children. The Year 1 children, for example, explored the topic of “Into the Woods” which involved the study of a range of characters such as Robin Hood. In Year 5, the focus of Ancient Greece provided scope for the study of Greek Myths and Legends such as Theseus and the Minotaur, thus engaging boys and girls alike. A science lesson in key stage 2 seen on the day, investigated “how do nails rust?” which involved the children dropping new nails into various solutions in order to formulate a conclusion. The children were totally engrossed in their task and fully engaged with their learning.
- The school’s motto “Learning without Limits” embodies the philosophy which enables the children to reach their full potential. The mascot “Buzz Lightyear” is a light-hearted yet significant reminder of the school community’s quest to aim high, in relation to the children’s attainment and achievement.
- The school understands the trends in relation to barriers to learning and issues which particular groups may experience. In this respect, the Gypsy Roma Traveller Team have supported both the attendance and development of literacy skills within this group, in partnership with the school. Children from Polegate won the annual, national Gypsy Roma Traveller writing competition on two consecutive years, and their awards were celebrated by the school.
- Rigorous analysis of contextual data and understanding of the needs of the community, has led to the school helping the children to acquire useful life skills, such as the ability to put forward a point of view. The school has therefore engaged with the NVQ debating award, in order that they are able to plan and deliver a persuasive discussion and gain confidence in speaking out. Children on the SEN register are given additional time or adaptations.
- Speech and language is also a deficit at the nursery stage within the school. Polegate staff, recognise that early intervention targeted to meet the needs of specific children, is the key to success in relation to inclusive practice. Since the previous IQM review, the nursery has undergone intense development in this respect and all children have benefitted from the changes, especially disadvantaged pupils.
- The nursery is now a vibrant and highly effective and Inclusive Learning environment. The Deputy Head Teacher has been pivotal to the process, ensuring the school’s high standards were replicated in the expectations set in

the nursery. There has since been a successful appointment made in terms of a Nursery leader, who has continued to make a very positive impact on this phase of the school.

- The nursery has an engaging range of resources, which provide opportunities for child initiated play. These are interspersed with more focused inputs. On the day of the IQM Assessment, groups of children were being taken on a “Treasure Hunt”. This was a maths based activity and “treasure” had been previously set down in various locations in the school. The children were expected to engage in a simple counting problem when they found the “” coins”. The children were extremely excited to be involved, demonstrating that the learning was stimulating and fun.
- The nursery staff have received training, which has enabled them to develop the children’s language. Visual prompts reinforce language, and themed days and weeks enable the children to develop their vocabulary.
- ELKAN training has taken place, at Level 3, and the progression to Level 4 is planned. This has impacted on the staff’s knowledge and expertise in supporting speech and language. In addition, focused sessions are led by the nursery teacher on a weekly basis, and there are also closer links with outside agencies with regards to speech and language support.

### **COE 3 – Areas for Development**

- To continue to develop speech and language, in the nursery. Whilst the staff have made considerable progress in this area, many of the interactions are linked to closed questioning. It will be helpful to develop further experience in building on a child’s initial response, before moving on to another question. This will provide more opportunities for vocabulary extension and support for their understanding of the world, from their own level.
- The school plans to continue to implement “Philosophy for Children”, which will give the staff the opportunity to further develop the thinking skills agenda. This may also assist the Nursery staff in refining their practice in relation to questioning, in addition to using the Bloom’s Taxonomy, which is already prevalent within the school.
- To continue to put nursery children’s “one-word answer” into a sentence, so they can begin to extend their speech. To encourage the children to copy and rehearse whole sentences in a particular context or topic.
- To avoid staff interrupting a colleague who is engaged in 1:1 support with a child, with conversations about practical aspects of the sessions. These would best take place before the session begins in order to avoid affecting the flow of learning.

### **COE 4 – Evaluative activities to determine the impact of initiatives.**

#### **Strengths**

- The leadership team have created a reflective and open professional culture, which continues to develop and refine systems cycles of review. This builds the school's capacity for continual improvement and has been instrumental in the improvement journey, which has led to the continued upward trend in results.
- The SLT have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning within the classrooms. The use of “Blink Tests” supplement other monitoring approaches, by providing an on – going snapshot of the impact of initiatives and the general quality of teaching. This leads to cycles of coaching and support where there is an identified need, thus addressing inconsistencies in the overall provision. The leadership team, describe the teaching as never less than good, with ever increasing proportions as outstanding, in the main. The high quality teaching therefore which is a feature of the school, is maintained and developed by this range of analytical processes, underpinned by a strong inclusive vision, which seeks the best for all children
- Groups of children who have been identified as underperforming benefit from the multi – faceted approach, which involves tailored programmes with evaluation and review being features of the cycle. The school staff are prepared to respond if something is not working and are not afraid to abandon a way of working if it fails to deliver the desired result. Pupil Progress meetings continue to play an important role in the evaluation of interventions and determining how they have impacted on Pupils' Attainment.
- Individual governors are assigned to a particular cohort and as such track the progress of the year group as a whole and groups within it. They are knowledgeable about any new initiatives the school may be engaged in, and contribute to the evaluation through their engagement with cycles of monitoring.
- The SENCO has attended a course related to the development of leadership and management of SEND. This will support the continued evaluation of SEND practices within the school and the impact they have on pupil progress.
- The new National Curriculum has been embraced by the staff, as it has given them the opportunity to thoroughly review blocks of work and to retain successful aspects, whilst replacing areas which have worked less well. This has become a philosophy within the school and year group teams are highly evaluative in their curriculum audits, in order that planning evolves and is refined.

### **COE 4 – Areas for Development**

- To continue to embed the use of “Blink Tests”, and involve the full range of subject leaders.
- To further develop the use of the Iris cameras, in relation to areas of the provision where action planning for improvement has taken place. This would provide an additional and more regular source of information regarding the quality of teaching, giving individual staff more insight into their own practice.
- To further involve the support staff, and governors in cycles of review.
- To explore ways in which the School Council and Head Boy and Girl can contribute to feedback about the quality of the learning and teaching.

### **COE 5 – Writing up findings, publication opportunities, links with IQM**

#### **Strengths**

- The SENCO has written an article in relation to the school’s specialism of Thrive practice and Lego Therapy.
- The presentation from the SENCO and Pupil Premium Champion at the East Sussex Inclusion Network Day provided all who attended with information about the good practice at Polegate in relation to Pupil Premium children
- The school’s website continues to be an excellent source of information for the parents and carers. It includes details of inclusive policy and practice and is being continually updated.
- The school’s engagement with social media, for example “Twitter” gives parents immediate updates and reminders. It gives the parents insight into various events through photographs and text. The holiday reading project for example, was launched recently in school with all the staff and children dressing up as characters from Roald Dahl’s books. A scene from Roald Dahl’s “Twits” was acted out at the launch assembly. The vibrant photos speak volumes to the school community about the lengths to which the staff go to in order to engage the children, and encourage them to embrace all opportunities, such as the library’s reading scheme.

#### **COE – 5 Areas for Development**

- To continue to explore links with other IQM schools in order to disseminate good practice and exchange ideas.
- To use “Twitter” to post examples of inclusive practice on the IQM website, and to gain ideas from the postings of other schools.

### COE 6 – School’s Centre of Excellence Specialism –

#### **“Sustaining innovative inclusive approaches to classroom teaching which impact on pupil progress.” Current focus – Mixed ability Teaching**

##### **Strengths**

- The teaching staff, have continued to refine the adoption of mixed ability teaching, which has had a positive impact on results. Polegate has continued an upward trend and the progress made by pupils is significantly above the national average, and in 2015 was in the top 1% in the country.
- Children are able to talk confidently about the choosing the type of work which relates to their level of understanding. They can select from Mild, Hot or Spicy which corresponds to the increasing complexity within a learning focus. Giving the pupils this degree of autonomy gives them the freedom to test their own potential. It also gives them the opportunity to back track, and receive additional support should it be necessary. This creates a learning environment which directly embodies the school’s philosophy of ‘Learning without limits’.
- Relationships between members of staff and high levels of professional dialogue and teamwork support the mixed ability teaching. Coaching, mentoring, moderation and review through the pupil progress meetings, ensures that outcomes are continually compared and best practice disseminated. There are a range of outstanding practitioners within the school who show great skill in managing the complexities of such an inclusive approach. Their expertise continues to have a positive influence on colleagues, in order that consistency of approach across the school as a whole has continued to grow.
- Every effort is made by the school, to involve the parents and explain to them how their child is progressing and how they are being taught, so it becomes a partnership. Information about the children’s attainment is distributed well before the Consultation Evenings so the parent has a chance to digest the information and is able to ask questions. Even Local Child-minders are provided for, through their attendance at the Early Excellence Hub, in order that the Lead Teacher for the phase is able to support them, and respond to any queries which may emerge. Such support means that the parents and carers are proactively involved. Those whose children have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities are given further support, through a variety of mechanisms in order that the gap between the progress of this group and their peers, is narrowed. The high quality inclusive teaching, which is a feature of the school and is being continually developed and improved, also ensures that disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- Inclusive teaching takes place within a culture where making mistakes and learning from them is an essential part of the culture. The children accept that sometimes they will find learning hard but are willing to persist, showing their

resilience. Teachers and support staff are always willing to respond to the children's misconceptions and encourage them to "have a go". This ethos is modelled and reinforced by the staff. On the day of the IQM Assessment the Head Teacher led an excellent assembly, which explored the concept of reports. She made reference to school reports which famous people had received, some of them less than complimentary. Winston Churchill's report, for instance, described him as a "pickle", and "always late and losing his books". Jilly Cooper's report declared, "She has set herself an extremely low standard which she has failed to maintain." Thus the point was made that you should never give up and that improvement is always possible. The Head Teacher emphasised to all the children in the school, "There is nothing wrong with making mistakes." Such a culture is major contributor to the school's successful improvement journey, since it encourages the children to realise that mistakes are inevitable part of the learning process, which encourages determination.

### **COE 6 – Areas for Development**

- To continue to embed the approach, ensuring that the range of opportunities children are provided with are consistent across the school. In some classes children change groups less frequently.
- To ensure that all staff use AFL techniques effectively to ensure they are monitoring the children's choice of group and subsequent progress within the context of individual lessons. Some children still find that they are insufficiently challenged, and demonstrate that they have already achieved the success criteria mid-session. They would like the chance to be further extended. In best practice, teachers quickly identify children, who are capable of moving to a group engaged in more demanding work.
- Sometimes able children would like the "Spicy" level, to be more challenging as they sometimes find it "too easy".
- To continue to refine the way in which inputs are delivered, in order for able children to have enough time to work at their own level. On some occasions, they are still held back while they wait for teachers to scaffold the learning of other groups, "I would like to get started on my work, but I have to wait. "
- To ensure that sessions start on time, and continue right to the end of a session, as is the case in best practice within the school.

### **Sources of evidence**

School and nursery tour and learning walks, talking to children, interviews with Head Teacher, Senco, governors, SLT, outside agency staff, and Pupil Premium member of staff, SEF, School Improvement Plan and School Website.