Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project

School	Polegate School Oakleaf Drive Polegate East Sussex BN26 6PT
Head/Principal	Ms Debbie Jones
IQM Lead	Ms Amie Ashdown
Date of Review	24th June 2026
Assessor	Ms Kris Wodehouse

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group	Cosmos Learning
Ambassador	Ms Fiona Robinson
Next Meeting	01-07-2026
Meeting Focus	TBC

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Summer 2025	10th June 2025	No
Autumn 2025	15th October 2025	Yes
Spring 2026	4th February 2026	School hosted the session.
Summer 2026	1st July 2026	IQM Lead will attend.

Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Polegate School continues to be an active cluster member and report that they gain a great deal from attending sessions, with several actions prompted or supported by information shared at these meetings.

During the visit to Kusama Class (the school's specialist SEND provision), the IQM Lead was able to explore structures and approaches that will inform the development of their own model within *The Lodge*. Provision is strongly play-based, with targeted 1:1 sessions in maths delivered individually, then the pupil returned to continuous provision.

Systems are in place to track pupils with high levels of need across the four areas of SEND, including physical and sensory development, ensuring progress is monitored closely and provision remains responsive. Polegate will consider this process.
The host school has a Forest School, with pupils taking on the role of Earth Heroes. This idea was taken back to Polegate and Eco Warriors are now appointed to empower pupils to take active responsibility for sustainability and environmental stewardship.

The school toilets have posters on display on the walls and on cubicle doors to provide immediate access to practical guidance and trusted support pathways. In pupil toilets, visual prompts support routines such as washing hands alongside Childline posters so pupils know how to seek help. Adult facilities include discreet signposting for menopause support and mental health guidance, with information on how to contact the school's Mental Health First Aiders.

At the second network meeting, Polegate School hosted and shared their developing practice around quality first teaching. Representatives from eighteen schools attended. Colleagues engaged positively with the approaches shown and several schools requested copies of materials, including the 'Reflect and Reset' framework. The school showcased suggestions posed by the question, 'What can a mainstream school do to support all learners?' sharing the school's intervention tracker, display boards showing pupil work, and how all classrooms have an enable table and calm corner to support pupils. The final session of this academic year will take place on 1st July and the IQM Lead will attend.

Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project

Evidence

- Welcome and tour of the school to see *Soft Start* provision.
- Observation of the *Forest school* and *The Sanctuary* soft start provision.
- Learning Walk to observe Talk for Writing
- Observation of Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) girl's group intervention
- A range of displays and documentation, including newsletters and pupil journals.
- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) Floor Books
- Leaflets including, The 12 Rocks of Wellbeing
- Makaton 8 signs poster
- Various certificates - Attendance Award certificate, praise postcards, Spotlight moment
- PowerPoint presentation

Additional Activities

- Meeting with the Senior Leadership Team
- Meeting with Intervention Staff – Speech and Language Team and Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) staff
- Meeting with PSHE Lead
- Meeting with SLT member leading on Talk 4 Writing
- Meeting with Year 6 Pupils – various leadership roles including Head Boy and Head Girl, Science Ambassador and School Council
- Meeting with Parents of SEND pupils.
- Meeting with Governor

Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project

Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The purpose of Polegate School's Flagship Project 2025-2026 was to continue to strengthen the parent offer and further develop inclusive practice across the school through enhanced training for all staff in neurodiversity and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Thereby ensuring a consistent, informed approach across the school.

Parental Engagement

The school recognises that relationships are key and they have focused on improving communication, and their work with families. This has resulted in improved engagement with families, increased confidence in supporting children at home, and a stronger sense of partnership between school and parents.

The school launched an online Parent Portal on the school website, which provides families with easy access to a wide range of resources designed to support learning, well-being and home-school communication. The portal brings together key information in one place, enabling parents to access guidance, signposting, curriculum material, and practical support whenever they need it. This development strengthens transparency, empowers families, and enhances the school's commitment to working in genuine partnership with its community.

Other offers include newsletters for all parents, information drop-ins, Senior Leadership Team available at the school gates each morning, weekly parent sign-up meetings which are available to book with The SENCo, SEND parent drop-ins at parents evenings, SEND review meetings, and The *Polegate Post* which provides information and support for parents and carers of SEN pupils. All previous *Polegate Post* issues will be uploaded to the Parent Portal for access by all families.

Workshops are delivered for parents in partnership with Eastbourne College such as cookery classes and managing a budget. The school has also rebranded 'coffee mornings' to highlight the focus of the session. A recent session on anxiety was attended by more than twenty parents and carers. Further sessions on sleep and toileting have also taken place.

Access to mental health apps and coaching sessions

The school recently hosted a highly successful 'Welcome to Early Years Meeting,' which was well attended by a range of external support agencies, giving parents a clear overview of the help available to their children beginning school.

A representative from the Mental Health Support Team attended and offered 1:1 parent coaching sessions; these were fully booked, demonstrating both the level of need within the community and the trust families place in the school's partnership work. This proactive approach ensures parents feel supported from the outset and strengthens the school's commitment to early intervention and family wellbeing.

The school is actively embedding the 12 Rocks of Wellbeing, with pupils increasingly able to articulate what each 'rock' represents and how it supports their personal development. Each pupil's home school journal includes a clear list of the 12 Rocks, enabling them to independently tick off when they demonstrate or practise a particular rock. This simple but powerful system promotes self-reflection, ownership and daily habits that bolster physical and emotional wellbeing.

The Assessor also spoke with two parents of pupils with SEND, both of whom expressed that the school has gone above and beyond in the support offered, not only for their children's individual needs but also for them as parents. Securing Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and support to find appropriate specialist provision was emphasised. This highlights the school's deeply nurturing and inclusive approach.

Teaching, Learning & Environment

The school had planned to develop a dedicated sensory support THRIVE room and invested in training three members of staff to lead this provision. However, two of the trained staff left in the autumn term, meaning the room has not been established as intended. Despite this setback, the school has successfully created a vibrant KS1 sensory garden, which now serves as an enriching resource for pupils. The space includes musical instruments, a working water pump, sand play, and a sheltered area, offering a highly engaging environment that supports sensory exploration, regulation, and outdoor learning.

The Forest School continues to be developed with improvements to the pond area and raised beds growing beans, tomatoes, and potatoes.

The school continues to upskill teachers to refine classroom practices through a significant number of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities provided. Teachers can book a meeting with the SENCo for CPD or consultation. Regular signposting, sharing resources and a CPD folder for all interventions has been created for easy access.

Further CPD sessions this year included:

- De-escalation training
- Using Clicker
- Demand Avoidance
- Jump Ahead
- Dyscalculia
- Autism
- Dyslexia
- Speech link

The pupil home school journal has a dedicated mental health section, providing families with clear, accessible guidance to support emotional wellbeing. This section includes the school's '12 Rocks of Wellbeing', which has been introduced as a whole-school framework to help pupils to understand and develop positive mental health habits.

It also signposts a range of recommended wellbeing apps and outlines other mental health programmes available to families, ensuring parents have practical tools and information at their fingertips.

Although the third target from the previous year was to review English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision, the school made a strategic decision to shift its focus to Talk 4 Writing (T4W) after being invited to participate in the T4W SEND project and become a T4W Centre. During the visit, the Assessor observed a range of lessons, including the dedicated T4W SEND group, and noted the consistency, vibrancy, and pace across all sessions. The impact of this work was clearly evidenced: one SEND pupil's handwriting had improved significantly, and the Assessor viewed a recording of him confidently reading aloud his own written work.

Additionally, the Senior Leadership Team suggested that they may explore gaining National Champion status. The IQM Lead would prefer to establish the new SEND provision, '*The Lodge*,' during 2026/2027 and consider applying from summer 2027.

Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project

Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

Project Title: To continue to strengthen Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and neurodiversity provision by creating consistently inclusive, nurturing environments from EYFS to Year 6.

Project Overview: Polegate School aims to consolidate recent SEMH developments while improving provision for an increasing number of neurodiverse pupils.

Objectives:

Ensure the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of all learners, including those with high needs. Developing consistent inclusive classroom practice ensuring accessibility for neurodiverse pupils.

To strengthen the accuracy and impact of SEND and wellbeing provision by ensuring robust identification and assessment processes using clear starting points, ongoing monitoring and writing clear exit point notes.

To reinforce whole-school wellbeing, PSHE and family engagement by embedding a consistent wellbeing framework, enhancing the quality and coherence of PSHE provision and deepening partnerships with families so that pupils' social, emotional, and mental health needs are supported both in school and at home.

Planned Actions:

The 12 Rocks of Wellbeing has been launched and the PSHE team will lead and further embed through a structured programme of assemblies, classroom activities, and regular parent communication. Using the school's social media platform, post a weekly wellbeing challenge for families. Align all wellbeing activity with the new PSHE curriculum to ensure a coherent, whole-school approach that supports pupils' personal, social, emotional, and mental health development.

Utilising the new partnership with the local specialist school to build staff and Senior Leadership Team confidence in adapting the curriculum so that pupils with very high and complex needs can access a strong, meaningful learning experience. Insights from specialist provision and early years practice will directly inform the development of *The Lodge*, a dedicated space designed to provide tailored, high-quality support for pupils with complex SEND profiles.

Develop the outside area of *The Lodge* for continuous outdoor learning opportunities. Continue to implement the Talk for Writing project specifically for SEND pupils, ensuring structured, language-rich teaching that supports communication, sequencing and writing confidence. Outdoor and wider school learning spaces to be used more intentionally to support pupils who benefit from alternative environments, including Sensory Circuit corridors.

ELSA provision continues to grow, with Talk Time sessions for pupils available.
The team should plan further outreach for families, including coffee mornings and writing exit reports that can be shared with both home and class teachers. This ensures a joined-up approach to SEMH support and builds staff confidence in supporting pupils.

Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project

Overview

The IQM Flagship review at Polegate School was a genuine pleasure to undertake, providing an opportunity to experience first-hand the fantastic work taking place across the school and the further embedding of inclusive practice since the previous visit a year ago. Polegate is a thriving, highly inclusive and successful school, underpinned by strong values that shape every aspect of provision. The nurturing ethos has a profound impact on relationships, with pupils demonstrating exceptional levels of care, respect, and acceptance towards one another.

The school's reputation for outstanding inclusive practice continues to grow, making it a recognised centre of excellence for inclusion both within the local area and beyond.

The IQM Lead provided a comprehensive tour of the school, enabling the Assessor to observe pupils fully engaged in their learning. A calm, purposeful atmosphere is evident throughout, with exemplary behaviour for learning consistently displayed across all classrooms. Adults know all the pupils exceptionally well, and the strength of relationships between staff and pupils was clear in every interaction observed. A positive, aspirational culture permeates the school, with the vision of 'learning without limits' woven seamlessly into daily practice and reflected in the attitudes, routines and expectations seen throughout the review day.

It was a privilege to observe the variety of soft start provision including Forest school access, The Sanctuary, and sensory circuits all accessible before the start of the school day. The variety of support enabled the pupils to be regulated before entering the classroom environment. The Assessor also met the new school dog, Bruno, who has already become an invaluable part of the school community, playing a key role in supporting pupils with anxiety and gently encouraging those reluctant to come into school. The school also has a therapy dog, Rufus, who visits once a week.

One pupil spoke enthusiastically about his enjoyment of Lego building, proudly sharing a list of the models he has created on display in the school library. He explained that the activity helps him to feel calm and settled.

All classrooms make effective use of a wide range of visual, communication and learning support to ensure that every pupil can access the curriculum. The school is well resourced with IT and a variety of assistive tools that enhance learning and promote independence. Whole school approaches are embedded consistently, including calm corners, movement breaks, a bell for attention, literacy washing lines, class visual timetables, working walls, the 'no hands up – stand and be proud' strategy and talk friends. These shared practices create a predictable, inclusive learning environment where pupils feel secure, supported, and ready to learn.

Pupils confidently reaffirmed the inclusive practices that the Assessor observed in classrooms, highlighting additional supports such as enable tables, movement breaks when needed and the availability of fidget toys to stay focused. They spoke articulately about the range of wellbeing spaces across the school, clearly explaining the purpose of the Sanctuary as a place to go when feeling overwhelmed, and the HIVE as a space where they can talk to a trusted adult. Pupils also described how, at lunchtimes, those

wanting a quiet environment can choose to spend time in the Glade studio. Their ability to name, understand and independently access these provisions demonstrates how deeply embedded the school's inclusive ethos is in daily life.

Polegate has recently become a Lead Careers school and has been awarded the prestigious Skills Builder Gold Award, recognising its commitment to developing essential skills across the curriculum. The eight skills builder competencies are prominently displayed in classrooms, with the school focusing on one skill each term to ensure pupils build these attributes progressively. This structured approach reflects the school's commitment to preparing pupils for future learning, employment, and life beyond primary education.

Discussions with key members of staff during the review were extremely useful in confirming that the school continues to successfully address all elements of the IQM Award, supported by documentary evidence, both before and during the review, to enhance and underpin discussions.

Polegate is recognised as a Talk for Writing (T4W) Centre and highlight school, recently hosting a school bringing all teaching and support staff to observe a T4W session. Working walls and literacy washing lines are well established and filled with high quality supports for independent writing.

At a recent Year 6 moderation session the school was praised for their successful outcomes with the moderation lead stating, "your pupils writing inspires other schools." Pupil books showed the progression from cold task, short burst writing to hot task. All pupils have a magpie book that they carry throughout the school day, containing writing ideas and vocabulary. Many scaffolds are available such as Clicker, Communication in Print and word banks.

Parents confirmed the school's highly collaborative approach, explaining that they work closely with staff and 'learn together' to support their child. They spoke positively about the school's commitment to understanding each pupil as an individual and providing a truly unique approach tailored to their specific needs.

The Assessor met with a Governor who reported that there are regular catch-up sessions with the SENCo, ensuring strong communication and clear understanding of current priorities. Comprehensive reports are shared in advance, and most questions are answered early in the meeting, enabling time for meaningful discussion. Governors provide both challenge and support in equal measure and expressed pride in the school's ongoing inclusion work and the impact it continues to have on pupils and families.

I would like to thank Polegate School for the very warm welcome and the time given during the day. It was a privilege to meet such passionate and dedicated staff, who are supported to achieve success and deliver outstanding support in such an inclusive school. What continues to stand out very clearly is the pride and passion of the staff and this is demonstrated in the way they engage and work with each other, pupils, and families to more than meet needs, going above and beyond what is expected.

inclusive practice and I am firmly of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark to maintain its status as a Flagship School. I therefore recommend that the school retains its Flagship Status and is reviewed again in 12 months. The next review will look closely at how the school has interacted with its Inclusion Cluster and promoted continuing outreach. Evidence of cluster working will underpin the capacity for the school to maintain its Flagship Status.

Assessor: Ms Kris Wodehouse

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:



……
Joe McCann MBA NPQH
Chief Executive Officer of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd