



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



<b>School</b>	Polegate School Oakleaf Drive Polegate East Sussex BN26 6PT
<b>Head/Principal</b>	Mrs Debbie Jones
<b>IQM Lead</b>	Mrs Debbie Jones
<b>Date of Review</b>	2nd July 2024
<b>Assessor</b>	Ms Louise Simpson

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

<b>Cluster Group</b>	Cosmos Learning
<b>Ambassador</b>	Ms Fiona Robinson
<b>Next Meeting</b>	TBC
<b>Meeting Focus</b>	TBC

### **Cluster Attendance**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Summer 2022</b>	10th June 2022	Yes
<b>Autumn 2022</b>	11th November 2022	Yes
<b>Spring 2023</b>	17th March 2023	Yes
<b>Summer 2023</b>	16th June 2023	Yes
<b>Autumn 2023</b>	07th November 2023	No
<b>Spring 2024</b>	27th February 2024	Yes
<b>Summer 2024</b>	11th June 2024	Yes

### **The Impact of the Cluster Group**

Polegate School continues to be an active cluster member and reports that they have gained a great deal from attending sessions, with several actions supported or triggered by information shared at these meetings. Examples of this are the introduction of a therapy dog who visits fortnightly to support targeted individuals. The school has also reviewed the tracking of Education, Healthcare and Healthcare Plan (EHCP) provision using EXCEL following attendance at the February meeting.

While Polegate School values attending other schools, they would also like to host a cluster meeting to showcase some of their work, which they have not had the opportunity to do as yet. Next year, they would also like to distribute attendance to a wider staff group so that a range of individuals can share the experience and focus on issues that they are already leading or might wish to. This is indicative of the distributed leadership of inclusion within the school.



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### **Evidence**

- A range of displays and documentation, including newsletters
- Work samples
- Learning to walk to observe interventions
- Learning Walk to Observe Literacy Lessons/Talk for Writing/Visuals and Calm Corners
- Welcome and tour of the school by Key Stage 2 pupils
- Observation of the Forest School Session

### **Meetings held with**

- Meeting with the school council
- Meeting with Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) Lead, Attendance Officer, and Pupil Premium Lead
- Meeting with Governors
- Meeting with Parents or Carers
- Meeting with the Senior Leadership Team
- Meeting with Intervention Staff



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### Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

Much of this review visit provided the opportunity to see how the intention to make Talk 4 Writing (T4W) both embedded and used across the curriculum is evident. The consistency in approach was apparent during the learning walks, no matter which class or year group, and progression was demonstrated. This includes both the physical tools displayed and used, such as the washing lines and the magpie book for gathering vocabulary and other ideas for future use. The principle of talking before writing was universally observed, with teaching assistants supporting themselves well with their whiteboards for recording ideas, helping with classroom management at the same time and ensuring that voices were heard. The writing journals are also an exciting new development, with T4W advocating this idea with other schools.

The passion for this approach is still evident, and apart from the drive to ensure that writing becomes in line with reading, the desire that every child should see themselves as a writer comes across very. This aspiration has been supported by one particular author who shared her journey with someone who did not consider themselves a successful writer.

The school has been reflective and has reinvigorated the approach, recognising that their previous adaptation of the programme was not having the desired impact and now delivering the programme in its entirety. One staff member commented, "it is not just that results have gone up; the passion for writing has increased too. There is no let-up, however, and all staff meetings include a 15 minute T4W element, keeping the momentum and the focus alive.

The areas of development since the last visit have been addressed, culminating in Polegate School becoming a T4W Showcase School, supporting other schools, and achieving recognition from Pie Corbett for their excellence. Polegate School has also delivered at a local conference and continues to support other schools while still reviewing practice through undertaking a T4W audit.

The visit to Polegate School also demonstrated progress in the commitment to develop inclusive and adaptive teaching throughout the school. Staff have received training in several areas to support this, including Clicker 6 training, Dyslexia training, the introduction of audiobooks and visuals training, and implementation.

As a result, the school has been asked to deliver at an Inclusion Conference in recognition of their use of visuals and has been awarded dyslexia-friendly status for East Sussex. Makaton is a current area of focus and development.

Parents and carers are included in this ethos of learning and have had opportunities to engage in several sessions presented in accessible ways, covering cooking, Neuroninja, and a range of workshops to support children. Progress is shared effectively through daily communication and face-to-face meetings. An exceptional addition is a two-way mirror in the intervention space, where parents are unobtrusively able to observe work with their child's modelling strategies, which has been extremely successful, powerful, and empowering. It has been particularly helpful for those who perhaps needed the confidence to observe first before engaging together. The mirror is also used for in-



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house training for teaching assistants and teachers and external training for a range of partners uniquely and positively. There are plans to develop this further, and the potential for impact is exciting.

The introduction of standing desks has been a huge success, with pupils reporting how “they help me concentrate, I can move without feeling like I have to hold in when sitting” and “when I sit, I find my legs move around, but with the standing desk, it doesn’t happen anymore, and I can concentrate on my learning.” This investment again shows the commitment this school has to addressing individual needs.

The use of the sanctuary has developed since the last visit, and pupils showing me around the school described how this is used with great understanding and empathy for fellow students, which is heartening.

The school has recognised that there is an increase in Reception Year children arriving who are non-verbal. They have responded by developing a Ready to Learn Reception Room, which is essentially a developmental, smaller-scale classroom operating with familiar structures and systems in a way that supports the transition to the mainstream classroom. This has been very successful. There are plans to develop a similar outdoor space.

The intervention team is a huge asset to the school due to its continuity. These staff have been able to develop their interests and expertise. The sessions I observed, including Numbers Count, Reading Recovery, and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA), were professional, well planned, and took place in bespoke rooms that were tailored to the intervention and were welcoming, well-resourced, motivating, and calm. These are the best ‘fit for purpose’ spaces I have seen on any visit. The staff spoke passionately regarding their input, impact, and systems of revisiting once interventions cease.

The Sanctuary is responsive and adaptive, with a combination of planned and reactive work, with pupils increasingly identifying their needs independently. Work is also being planned with a local animal sanctuary building on the success of therapy dog visits for targeted individuals.

The Forest School area is also well planned to facilitate access for all as well as targeted sessions for individuals with careful monitoring and collaboration between the lead teacher and other staff in the school. I observed good collaborative behaviour between students with very differing needs.

The training for the Senior Leadership Team on Inclusive and Adaptive Practice was attended, with knowledge and strategies being cascaded to all staff. This continuous professional development continues, and there is a particular emphasis on ensuring that Early Career Teachers are supported with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) strategies. The impressive Everything Polegate School Manual serves as a useful guide and prompt, with staff also being able to access a range of support from colleagues both formally and informally.



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SEND learning walks have been informative, and the coaching of curriculum leaders in pioneering inclusive and adaptive practice in their subjects is expected. The school also invites external peers and other professionals in to support review processes, which is another example of Polegate School as an outward-facing school. There is a good balance between supporting others in certain areas and accepting professional advice and development.

There is clear evidence that the actions for the Flagship Project this academic year have been achieved, and serious consideration has been given to how this can be developed for the project next year.

### **Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project**

Following on from the aim to develop inclusive and adaptive teaching throughout the school, the next stage is to build on this with the following project being agreed upon as a cohesive development:

#### **Project Title:**

**Improving Adaptive Teaching and creating an inclusive school that supports learners (including Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH))**

#### **Outline of the Project:**

Polegate School is looking to build on the adaptive teaching practices they worked on last year and this year. They will focus on improving the way they support Dyslexia in school, and Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) needs to access learning. The aim will be to ensure that the school has a communication-friendly environment where teachers' understanding of dyslexia and processing needs improves while maintaining the success of T4W.

#### **Steps will include:**

- Development of a sensory support room
- Creating a ready-to-learn space
- Creating a sensory garden
- Trialling and developing a project with the local authority for using a 'Cubbie' to support regulation with sensory input
- Implementing whole-school lessons on Zones of Regulation
- Offering a wider range of workshops for parents in partnership with Eastbourne College

In addition, the school has committed to maintaining ongoing advice and sharing practice with external educational settings and seeking further evidence-based practice to develop the in-school offer.



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### Overview

Polegate School is a popular, oversubscribed 3-form entry school serving an expanding local community. It has an enviable space that has been utilised creatively, dynamically, and effectively to meet changing demands in the school. These include a swimming pool, thoughtfully planned outdoor areas, including the Forest School area, and other play opportunities, as well as bespoke areas for intervention that reflect the commitment to these aspects of support. This is not static, and following an audit, there are planned building changes to Year 4 classrooms so that they utilise the learning space more effectively.

Following a warm welcome at the school reception area, I was immediately immersed in the workings of Polegate School by being independently led by students who were given autonomy to show me the things they felt were important for me to see. The environment was not only impressive and well looked after; it was having the desired impact, as areas were explained to me with great confidence and understanding from displays to the sanctuary to outdoor areas and through other observations demonstrating both curriculum intent and interventions. The pupils were knowledgeable and empathetic when, for example, explaining how certain areas were used to support individual needs.

There was a calmness wherever I went, despite the creative use of all spaces. I observed several individual support activities. Displays were purposeful, aesthetically impressive, and admired and utilised by the pupils who discussed many of them with me. This is a text-rich school, and this was evident not only in the accessible library area with calm spaces but wherever I went. When asked about some of the books, I saw the pupils describe how particular messaging and representation are important.

The classroom observations were a joy to witness, with consistency where appropriate, supporting transitions as well as individualism in each one, such as the 'calm corners' each of which had its own identity. The use of Zones of Regulation was evident, along with a variety of tools such as 'enable tables,' visual timetables, and Magpie books. There are many strategies and supports that are embedded in whole-class practice so that modifications for individuals who require them are added without unnecessary identification, as the environment is already inclusive, along with an acceptance that peers may require different things. One pupil commented on a friend who had a tool for Zones of Regulation and how this helped him identify a need for calm space.

Another standout feature is the use of handwriting by teachers who model this well and consistently, again supporting transition. Colour coding and other standardisation are also important features of classrooms.

The school's statement of "outstanding but always striving for exceptional," which is clear as you enter Polegate School, was demonstrated through observations and discussions that took place during my visit. There is a tangible "can do and will do" ethos that pervades this school, with every achievement discussed followed by clear, concrete plans for future developments.



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There appears to be a very good relationship between the governing body and the leadership team. They have an excellent understanding of initiatives and developments within the school and ensure that there are discussions about focus, capacity, and outcomes, mindful of the wellbeing of staff as well as the pupils. They gave the example of the impact that being a behaviour hub had on benefits for the school; however, they also commented on how ceasing this has released time for other initiatives with potentially equal or greater impact.

The Governors also discussed the analysis of the staff wellbeing survey and developments, including group supervision and informal time with the Headteacher as well as structured performance management and development.

The governing body has a good understanding of the changing demographics of the area and the school population and the implications of this moving forward, including budget considerations. They mentioned positively the team around the school's support for attendance and the skill of staff in supporting this. They commented that they felt well-informed and involved, creating a level of confidence in managing change.

Staff development is a strength in the school, with practice collated in a singular place in the Everything Polegate School Handbook. Staff take responsibility for updating their specific sections annually. ECTs are well supported, including access to coaching sessions and additional training using the National College materials. PPA for staff is organised as a team, with a whole morning given to this. Interests are encouraged and nurtured.

The pupil experience goes well beyond the traditional classroom, with an impressive array of activities that are encouraged and celebrated through accessible newsletters. Staff commit a great deal of time to these as they see the value, and pupils speak highly of these experiences. Some take place outside of school, but many are embedded in the school day, reflecting the importance the school places on these. They include, to name a few, European Language Day, Pen Pals, International Women's Day, Cookery Club, Dance Club, Coding, Gardening and the Mission to Mars. The History Club has focused on family trees. There are also music opportunities, and those who may be disadvantaged are ensured access, including financial support.

Pupils spoke about opportunities they had had, including trips, sporting experiences, regular debates, and key events in schools. They also spoke about how they were motivated by systems such as house points, learning ladders, praise postcards, spotlight moments, and how see-saws can be used to share work at home. As a student council, they commented that it was effective as they were listened to and had several ideas adopted. They spoke about their role in parking patrols following their concern about inconsiderate parking from some parents, which was a hazard. They also mentioned the installation of a clamber stack. They also positively discussed their roles in school as buddies.

When asked about the school generally, they described it as "a place with lots of friendships in it" where "classmates and people you don't know are kind to you" and where "teachers make sure you are included and never left out." Pupils also told me that "this school celebrates things you do outside of school; they're interested."



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Parents commented positively on the response and development of SEND support in the school, with one parent saying that “the Headteacher comes across as a passionate leader, and I have every faith that her vision to ensure all children receive the best education is embraced by all teachers at the school.”

Sports are an excellent example of inclusion in school practice. There is a wide range of sporting events that all can participate in, including an EYFS sports festival as well as specific SEND events. The most recent one involved 14 Key Stage (KS)2 pupils, helping to increase participation and promote sport. It is an area strongly led by impressive awards and accreditation reflecting this passion. The school has been considered for the Platinum Plus School Games award recently.

During this visit, I met with the Attendance Lead whose work was praised by the Governors during that discussion. She has excellent relationships with families and can strike the balance between understanding barriers to attendance that will be specific to individual families while providing both support, such as help with Zones of Regulation in the home, and appropriate challenges. There is good communication regarding family needs with appropriate agencies and the school, resulting in support such as the need for soft starts in some situations in the morning.

PSHE has been another exciting area of development, with a move from recording in individual books to creating class floor books that reflect discussions in a much more useful way to pass on to the next teacher. It is also something that pupils read in the class, both reinforcing learning and opening further discussion. There is real pride in the curriculum, and class teaching is enhanced in other areas of the school, such as assemblies, which create memorable moments. One example was the letting off of confetti cannons to illustrate how “kindness can be spread like confetti.” Curriculum leaders are also challenged by how diversity is reflected in their areas of expertise.

A standout aspect of my day was learning about how aspirations for all at Polegate School are supported and challenged and how career-related learning is facilitated. This passion stems from a commitment to inclusion alongside well-informed research regarding how, early on in a child's life, aspirations and career expectations are formulated, sometimes having a limiting impact. For this reason, the school has made a concerted effort to expose pupils at the school to an impressive array of ‘employer encounters’ as part of their career-related learning, with Year 1 children already being on a pathway. There is a bank of 42 employers utilised by the school who are accessed in particular year groups or as a whole school, creating interest and curiosity.

There is a focus on the eight-themed Skills Builder as an accelerator programme embedded in the curriculum to acquire skills transferability. Resources used in school include rich texts about real-life careers.

Enhancing this is the Scholars Programme, run in conjunction with PhD tutors from universities who share their subject knowledge and passion for learning with small groups. Polegate School currently has pupil premium students who have just completed the seven-week programme, all of whom have ‘graduated.’ The time and financial commitment to this is impressive and potentially life-changing for some.





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This is a school with dynamic leadership and a tangible passion for inclusion. The creation of a new SEND team appears to have kicked off some new aspirations, adding to the previously good practice, and it seems that there is no limit to what this school wishes to achieve while maintaining a strong ethos of helping other schools. I have no hesitation in recommending that Polegate School meet all the requirements to retain the Inclusion Quality Mark's Inclusive School Award as a Flagship School 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. In addition, so that the school can extend their support to others, I would strongly recommend that they apply for the IQM National Inclusion Champion Status at the next opportunity.

**Assessor: Ms Louise Simpson**

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. McCann".

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