



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	11 th June 2025
Assessor	Ms Kris Wodehouse

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group	Cosmos Learning
Ambassador	Ms Fiona Robinson
Next Meeting	Autumn 2025
Meeting Focus	TBC

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2023	7 th November 2023	No
Spring 2024	27 th February 2024	Yes
Summer 2024	11 th June 2024	Yes
Autumn 2024	13 th November 2024	Yes
Spring 2025	4 th March 2025	Yes
Summer 2025	10 th June 2025	No



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The Impact of the Cluster Group

Polegate School continues to be an active cluster member, and report 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

- Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) provision – Successful funding bid to the Bedgebury Foundation grant. Learnt more about ELSA and have since implemented termly ELSA sessions and developing parental support.
- SEMH, Emotional coaching - Emotional coaching sheets for teachers and pupils have been developed since this meeting. Also, greater awareness of financial support charities for families.
- 10th June session – unable to attend.

While Polegate School values attending cluster meetings at 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, yet. Many of the schools are based in London and travel to Polegate may impede however, the school plan to host a meeting and will extend the invitation to other local schools.

Evidence

- Welcome and tour of the school by Head Boy and Head Girl
- Soft Start Provision tour
- Learning walk: Focus on SEMH/ Calm Corners/ Neurodiverse provisions
- Socially Speaking Intervention
- Learning Walk to Observe Talking Partners
- Observation of the Forest school Alternative provision
- Jump Ahead Intervention
- A range of displays and documentation, including newsletters
- Work samples
- Newsletter Books
- Flyers
- 12 Rocks of Wellbeing



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- Makaton sign of the week
- Various certificates - Attendance Award certificate, 10 Steps to success bookmark, praise postcards, I was spotted going above & beyond, Spotlight moment
- Home School Journal

Additional Activities

- Meeting with the Senior Leadership Team
- Meeting with Intervention Staff (SEMH)
- School council and Sanctuary - Meeting with Pupils to Discuss the Impact of the IQM Priorities
- Team around children Meeting
- Meeting with Parents
- Meeting with Governors



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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The purpose of Polegate School's Flagship Project 2024-2025 was to improve Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) provision for all. The school chose to focus on enhancing SEMH provision for pupils as this is now the highest need on the Special Educational Need (SEN) register.

The school opted to enhance their SEMH provision and curriculum offer by providing alternative provision, both out of grounds and on school ground. They offer more support and outreach to families to support neurodiverse needs and the SEMH that comes alongside this. They also increased continuing professional development (CPD) and awareness that staff have to fully meet the needs of the pupils they teach.

The review visit provided an opportunity to witness how embedded the SEMH practices are. There was a discussion to reflect on the next steps from the previous review July 2024. The areas of development since the last visit have been addressed. All new staff have received SEN training and Early Career Teachers received 1:1 CPD.

Increase and widen the parental offer to support families manage SEMH and behaviour difficulties at home

- Polegate Post provides information and support for parents and carers
- Workshops have been delivered for parents in partnership with Eastbourne College such as cookery classes and managing a budget

Enhanced training for all staff focused on Neurodiversity and SEMH needs

- Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) is a national project, funded by NHS England. The IQM Lead has participated in this project providing educational aspect in a multi-disciplinary team.
- A wealth of continuing professional development has been provided for all staff to access:
 - Dyslexia
 - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
 - Precision teaching
 - Better Reading Programme – All teaching assistants have been trained
 - Autism
 - Dyscalculia
 - SEMH best practice/ Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)



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- Hypermobility
- Sensory environments
- Selective Mutism
- Makaton
- Speech and Language
- Jump Ahead/Sensory circuits
- SEND and inclusive Physical Education
- Colourful semantics
- Selective Mutism
- Mental Health First Aid
- English as an additional language

Staff mentioned that CPD has had a positive impact on their provision to meet the needs of pupils at Polegate school. Staff know that they can continue CPD independently and access a folder on school drive for all interventions. They can find out what the intervention is and view resources.

Develop SEMH practices in school

The school has developed sensory support rooms: HIVE, Soft Starts, and the Sanctuary. Pupils can access these rooms as needed throughout the day. The assessor observed a few pupils using the Sanctuary before the school day began. Various activities help calm and regulate pupils before they go to their classroom. The addition of activity bags outside the Sanctuary is an excellent idea, allowing pupils to choose what they need to self-regulate.

The intervention team is a significant asset to the school. The staff spoke passionately regarding their input and impact of a huge range of interventions. The sessions observed, including Jump Ahead, Socially Speaking, and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA), were well planned, and took place in bespoke rooms that were tailored to the intervention and were welcoming, well-resourced, and calm. The ELSA team reflected on their practice when sessions were first introduced. Initially, fifty-six pupils were referred by teachers for ELSA sessions, but now, a more focused approach with smaller groups of seven to eight over two terms has been adopted. Additionally, more staff are being trained as THRIVE practitioners, with a new space under development for this intervention.



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A sensory garden has been established within a shared space for Key Stage 2 (KS2) pupils. These pupils are responsible for planting and maintaining this area. The garden has become a popular location during break time and quiet periods, where students engage in play, learning, and mindfulness. Recently, the school, with the aid of grant funding, installed a sensory canopy and sunshades to enhance the space further. This area is also utilised by Year 5 pupils in the school's alternative provision program during the afternoons. Here, pupils participate in gardening and have access to activities such as Lego and other educational pursuits. This initiative has been successful, leading the school to apply for funding to develop a sensory circuit area for Key Stage 1 pupils on the unused field space.

Throughout the school, designated areas facilitate continued learning for pupils. Communal areas are equipped with ready-to-learn spaces that include enable tables and access to a "cubbie" to assist with sensory regulation. The school has concentrated on implementing comprehensive lessons on Zones of Regulation, enabling pupils to articulate their strategies for managing emotions and self-regulation. Additionally, laminated cards featuring zone faces are being prepared for staff use with pupils. Each classroom is equipped with a calm corner, which pupils utilise effectively. Furthermore, each classroom contains a Worry Monster, where pupils can write down their concerns and place them inside the monster. Worry boxes are also available in communal areas throughout the school. Pupils reported that they know a "trusted adult if need to speak to someone." They also stated that, "we have regulation or soft start to calm down and feel safe."

Another development that is working extremely well is the alternative provision (AP) for pupils. This includes Forest School and sensory garden afternoons. 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. The assessor observed three pupils working collaboratively using the Forest School area during the afternoon and they were all engaged measuring an area beside the pond to create a wooden platform. One of the pupils said, "I like being outside in nature. We can take turns, listen, and practice teamwork."

Ongoing advice and sharing of practice with outside educational settings

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.

- Attendance at Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) hub. Establishing links with other schools. A school has visited Polegate school to find out more about mapping interventions
- Advised on the PINS national project
- Polegate school will be presenting at the East Sussex Inclusion conference in July 2025.

There is clear evidence that the actions for the Flagship Project this academic year have been achieved, transforming SEMH provision for all. Leaders have given serious consideration to how this can be further developed for the project next year.



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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

Project Title:

Creating an inclusive school by embedding Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) practices and enhancing support for EAL pupils.

Project Overview:

Polegate School aims to consolidate recent SEMH developments while improving provision for a growing number of EAL learners.

Objectives:

1. Strengthen parental engagement, especially in EYFS.
2. Enhance the school environment and teaching practices to embed SEMH.
3. Review and improve EAL provision.

Planned Actions:

1. EYFS & Parental Engagement

- Trial NeuroNinja assessment tool
- Embed 12 Rocks of Wellbeing
- Provide 40 hours of 1:1 parent coaching
- Extend ELSA offer with coffee mornings and practical tips for parents
- Launch an online family hub with support videos

2. Teaching, Learning & Environment

- Develop a sensory support room (THRIVE)
- Create a KS1 sensory garden
- Evaluate impact of new THRIVE-trained staff
- Continue to upskill teachers to refine classroom practices
- Add a mental health section to the home-school journal



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3. EAL Provision

- Provide targeted CPD for staff
- Involve EAL pupils in competitions
- Translate school menus
- Collaborate with the EAL service

Additionally, the SLT suggested further areas for development:

- Review current transition arrangements
- Explore National Champion status from summer 2026



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Overview

It was a pleasure to undertake the Flagship review at Polegate School and experience first-hand the fantastic work that is going on throughout the school. Polegate is a thriving, extremely inclusive and successful school, built on strong values which underpin all they do.

The Headteacher and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) have an acute understanding of the school's context, and a drive and passion to support their pupils and their families. There is constant reflection on how to improve and adapt approaches to meet the changing needs of the pupils and leaders are proactive in planning to meet these new challenges. Due to its reputation for excellent inclusive provision, the school has become a magnet for inclusion within the local area and beyond.

Polegate School has been visited by inspectors from Ofsted since its last IQM Flagship Review. The inspection report testifies to the inclusive ethos of the school:

'Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The deeply ingrained culture of mutual respect and understanding is seen through all areas of the school. Pupils and adults alike are cheerful, polite, and friendly. In early years, children's personal and social development is extremely well supported. Staff are determined that every child can succeed.'

'Pupils are safe and know that staff care about them. If ever they feel worried, they are confident that adults would help them. Staff make sure that the school is a happy and secure place.'

'Pupils who are disadvantaged, including those with SEND, are at the centre of the school's work. Staff quickly spot pupils' barriers to learning and ensure that pupils get the support that they need. This helps disadvantaged pupils to participate fully in the life of the school, to learn and achieve well.'

Ofsted Report May 2025

Following a warm welcome at the school reception area, the review day started with a tour of the school by the Head Boy and Head Girl. The pupils exuded pride and love for the school. They were polite, articulate, and appreciative of how lucky they were to be part of such a wonderful school community.

The nurturing ethos of the school has an excellent effect on relationships between pupils. I observed so much care and respect. Children are accepting and respectful of each other. They also overwhelmingly exhibit a confidence and self-assuredness that often belies their age.

The IQM Lead showed me around the school, enabling me to see pupils and staff at work. A calm, purposeful, teaching and learning atmosphere is evident throughout the whole school and the behaviour for learning observed during the review day was exemplary. All adults know all the pupils well and relationships between pupils and school staff were observed as being excellent. A positive culture is witnessed in every



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classroom visited. The school's vision of 'learning without limits' is tightly woven through daily life.

Across the school, areas have been carefully considered to provide opportunities for kindness, friendship, and reflection. The calm corners in each classroom are impressive. The assessor observed a child sat in the calm corner who was still able to access the teaching taking place. The environment is not only impressive and well looked after; it is 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.

Polegate's Golden Rules – Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Ready to Learn are evident throughout the school along with British Values Buzz. Makaton signs are also displayed throughout the school. All classrooms use a variety of visual, communication and learning supports. The school is well resourced for IT and various tools to assist learning. All classrooms also provide audio books so accessible to all pupils.

The assessor was fortunate enough to observe a meditation session in one of the Year 6 classrooms. It was incredibly calming, and all pupils were engaged in the session. The PSHE Floor Books are brilliant – they are a superb record of learning. It was particularly pleasing to see that recording of verbal answers seesaw QR codes were used for those children not able to write their responses.

It was a privilege to observe the Socially Speaking intervention where a child responded to the question what have you enjoyed today and they replied, "in the now with friends. My favourite bit is right now."

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. One member of staff confirmed that a pupil made thirteen months progress following Talk Partner intervention. Another quoted a child from the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) girls' group, 'what makes me special is that I'm autistic.'

The assessor met with pupils from Polegate Parliament to discuss the impact of their roles and pupil voice within the school. One area they identified for improvement was the provision of more after-school clubs. They discussed methods for gathering ideas from their peers and agreed to report back at the next meeting.

There was a real feeling of warmth and support in my meeting with parents. They appreciated how well staff know their children and how empathetic staff are to any concerns and worries they may have. Pupils who have certain needs are very well supported by the school and parents highly praised the school's practice describing the school as, "working in partnership with parents." One parent stated that, "the staff are amazing and fully supportive. The parents praised the transition arrangements where photos of the new class are shared, and the pupils visit the classroom the day before transition.



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The SEN Governor spoke highly of the ambitious SEMH plans and the fabulous staff. She spoke positively about the impact of interventions and the implementation of calm corners in the classrooms. The Governor stated that the next steps for the school are to share more widely externally the great practice and to further embed the SEMH approaches. The assessor suggested to the senior leadership team that there should be a period of reflection and embedding of the excellent work that has taken place this past year.

I would like to thank Polegate school for my warm welcome and the time they gave to me 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.

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: Ms Kris Woodhouse

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

Joe McCann

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