



## Annual Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



**School:** Holy Cross Catholic Primary School  
Gautby Road  
Bidston  
Merseyside  
CH41 7DU

**Head/Principal:** Ms Clare Higgins

**IQM Lead:** Ms Paula Brás

**Date of Review:** 9th December 2021

**Assessor:** Sarah Linari

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

**Cluster Group:** CIN NW

**Ambassador:** Craig Astin

### **Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day:**

- IQM Flagship review documentation
- Ofsted Report
- National performance data
- School website
- Classroom environment audit
- Inclusion data

### **Meetings held with:**

- Headteacher
- IQM Coordinator/Deputy Headteacher – SENDCo
- Foundation Stage Two Teacher
- Assistant Headteacher – English Lead, Key Stage 2 Lead, Assessment Lead
- Pupils
- Parents
- Engage and Change Company Director



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### Summary of Targets from 2020-2021

The School was invited to participate in the Cradle to Career project, which is funded by a local businessman's charitable foundation, The Steve Morgan Foundation. Steve Morgan CBE set up the foundation to support vulnerable children and families across the local area where he grew up. There is a recognition from staff in school that language skills underpin everything, and early language development is identified as the main area of need when children join the School in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Hence the decision to work in partnership with the Foundation under the communication and language project. Last academic year, the letter of commitment was completed along with the relevant on-line participation documentation. The teachers carried out the initial assessments and appropriate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes for staff were identified.

As a starting point, the EYFS Lead Teacher selected one child to trial the approaches with. The School participated in the Early Language Programme to promote Communication and Language within the Early Years. Following an evaluation of the impact and the success of the trial last year, the child made accelerated progress, the project is now being trialled with a small group. The IQM Lead describes the "huge amount of progress" made by the child when comparing the WellComm baseline data to the data after the intervention, as well as their improved use of language within the setting.

All children in EYFS are now screened using the WellComm speech and language toolkit which identifies any areas for development and outlines specific interventions and next steps. Due to the high numbers of pupils who start school with language development which is below age-related expectations, the Leaders decided to fund the Speech and Language Therapy service to work in school with identified children for one full day per week.

During the review, I met with the Assistant Headteacher who leads the Key Stage Two curriculum and whole-school English. The pupils whose reading levels fall into the bottom 20% are the focus for the Read Write Inc. interventions. At Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, they use the Read Write Inc. phonics scheme for the school approach to teaching phonics with a blended model of whole class and guided reading. In Key Stage One, phonics sessions have been extended to 50-minute sessions each morning. There are daily intervention sessions and catch-up phonics sessions too. At Key Stage Two, a Teaching Assistant leads short Read Write Inc. intervention sessions with targeted children in the afternoons. The Leaders have expanded the range of levelled reading books available to allow those children with lower reading ages to be able to enjoy reading books with more appropriate age-related interests. The Assistant Headteacher explained how "some children will practise reading with an adult in school up to three times day." Across the School there are daily 'read aloud' sessions in class when all teachers read high-quality books to the class to expose the children to new vocabulary and encourage reading for pleasure. To re-establish home reading expectations following periods of lockdown the Assistant Headteacher made a video for the School's website as he is aware that reading may be a barrier for some parents and carers, therefore sending a letter home is less impactful.



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There is a strategic focus on vocabulary development. The Assistant Headteacher leads the project and has delivered CPD for all staff on effective vocabulary instruction. Key vocabulary for the non-core subjects has been identified across the curriculum. For each subject, 12 words are highlighted for each unit of work. These key words are displayed on the working walls in classrooms and shared with home via the topic knowledge organisers.

With this Flagship Project being a long-term project, it is too early to measure impact data however the initial feedback from staff and early data captures such as the Year Two phonics screening are showing positive impact. Language Development is clearly a priority area which the Leaders have carefully planned for to ensure that all children can read and have a wide range of vocabulary.

### Agreed Actions for the Flagship Project

#### Project Title: Cradle to Career

Cradle to Career is a new initiative to transform opportunities for children and young people in North Birkenhead. The vision of Cradle to Career is that every child in North Birkenhead thrives, from cradle to career. The overall aim is to become a community that works together to give every child and young person the abilities and wellbeing that will enable them to succeed. The Cradle to Career Education Working Group aims to bring together five primary schools, two secondary schools and two Early Years facilities serving the North Birkenhead community in a collective impact approach. This working group will identify local priorities to address, and adopt, a collective impact approach to identifying and meeting these needs, enabling education providers to improve outcomes for their most vulnerable learners.

The group will:

- Work to identify the local barriers to pupils' engagement and attainment in education.
- Engage Senior School Project Leads in research and evidence-based practice, following a research cycle of Identify, Design, Deliver, Reflect.
- Support Leads to implement effective interventions and cascade learning around effective identification/intervention in their education settings to improve outcomes.
- Enable Leads to feedback learning and impact into local and national forums and contribute to improving the local system of support for children and young people.
- This academic year, the focus will be on implementing the intervention with a larger group of children in EYFS and using the WellComm data to analyse the impact.



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### The Impact of the Cluster Group

The IQM Coordinator and staff at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School enjoy working with the Cluster Group. They have attended the online Cluster meetings. The Autumn Term focus was the role of the SENDCo and how SEND is supported in different settings. The IQM Coordinator particularly liked the idea of a timeline of what happens with regards to SEND children's appointments/interventions and when for example, SALT assessment. She is planning to start an overview document to collate this information for Holy Cross Primary School. The Spring Term focus was education throughout lockdown. The IQM Coordinator and Assistant Headteacher presented at this meeting about their home learning offer. Unfortunately, they were unable to attend the Summer Term meeting. If they were to host a future Cluster Meeting, they would share their excellent practice of parental programmes and the Engage and Change project.

### Overview

The ethos at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is about the value of "every child and family." The IQM Coordinator talks about "relationships" underpinning everything they do as a school. The School's values are based on four key principles: every child has the right to be happy, safe, be treated with respect and have the right to learn. The Headteacher has the confidence to not put teaching and learning first, as she understands that children's physical and emotional needs have to be met before they can learn.

Not long after the appointment of the current Headteacher in 2018, Holy Cross Catholic Primary School was inspected by Ofsted and judged as 'requiring improvement', an evaluation the Headteacher and Governors agreed with. The School has since been on a rapid improvement drive and despite the disruption of the global pandemic, they have not stood still over the past couple of years. As a result of their Ofsted judgment category, the Leaders receive comprehensive support from the Local Authority School Improvement Partner (SIP). There have been six deep dives carried out over the past 12 months, all of which have had positive outcomes for the School. The Senior Team now judge provision as 'good' overall in their self-evaluation, a judgment which the Local Authority SIP shares.

With over two thirds of school families eligible for Free School Meals funding, the School's demographic has above average levels of poverty and deprivation. Therefore, looking after the pupils' mental and physical health and wellbeing had to be the number one priority for the School's Leaders during the periods of national lockdown. Owing to the high numbers of families who simply did not have enough food during lockdown, the School worked swiftly to establish links with local charities, such as the Charles Thompson Mission, to set up a Pantry in school for parents and carers to access weekly to allow them to provide food for the family. The School offers a free breakfast club for all children and in Foundation One and Two, there is breakfast available every day for when children arrive. Despite the need for the School to support children and families with many additional challenges, the staff do not lower the academic standards. They are passionate about the children; they know that education is the key to transforming



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their futures. Staff have a real desire for “the postcode the children are born in to not define who they are.”

The number of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is well above the national average, with 37% of the cohort having identified SEND. To support the parents of children with SEND, the SEND Coordinator hosts a weekly coffee afternoon. There are regularly external services invited into school to attend the meetings such as a representative from Autism Together. This provides an additional layer of support for families and gives them the opportunity to meet other parents who are going through a similar experience to them.

Since the return to school this academic year, the focus is on re-establishing routines and learning habits. However, supporting children’s mental health and wellbeing is the first priority in the School Development Plan. This year the Leaders have set up a partnership programme with Engage and Change, a Liverpool-based alternative education company who have received a grant from Merseyside Community Foundation to support the children at Holy Cross. As communicated on their website, Engage and Change “specialise in providing alternative education packages and enrichment sessions” which are “aimed at developing self-esteem, confidence, raising attendance and knowledge and understanding relating to health and wellbeing, leading to developing behaviour, employability, self-belief as well as helping break down barriers many will encounter.” The vision for the project, which currently involves all children from Years Five and Six, is to encourage positive mental and physical health and wellbeing as well as fostering good behaviour habits as an early intervention to prevent exclusions. The sessions mainly centre around sport. Pupils are collected by a minibus to attend engaging fitness sessions at Engage and Change’s specialist gym facility. The pupil feedback about the weekly visits is very positive.

The project ensues a holistic approach to encourage long-term changes and impact. Engage and Change also work with the parents. This year, parents of children from all year groups were invited to undertake NCFE Level One qualifications in Mental Health Awareness and a Cooking and Nutrition Course, which taught them how to cook healthy family meals on a budget. All parents engaged well with the course and completed their certificates. To facilitate the parents in undertaking the qualification, the School provided childcare facilities. During the review I met with two parents who have successfully completed the course. They were both extremely positive about the experience, commenting “I loved it,” “I enjoyed it every week,” “I enjoyed listening to other people’s experiences” and “we all bonded over the weeks.” Both parents have since signed up to complete further qualifications outside of school and said that doing the course gave them the confidence to go out and achieve something. Participation in the course has not only had a positive impact on the parents through improving their confidence, self-esteem and understanding of their own mental health but their children’s attendance has also improved. Feedback from both parents and the children about the Engage and Change project is overwhelmingly positive. It is clearly having a significant impact on improving children’s and parents’ future outcomes.

I had the opportunity to meet with a group of pupils during the review visit who spoke openly and honestly about their experience at Holy Cross Primary School. They were all happy and confident communicators. They were all able to talk about their favourite



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book and the value of reading is clearly instilled in them. They enjoy attending school and say that the “teachers help you when you need help” and “are really kind.” They enjoy going for reading sessions in the School Library which has recently been refurbished and has new books.

It was a delight to meet the staff, pupils and parents at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School. Throughout the review day, it was clear that the staff show genuine interest when interacting with the pupils. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher have forged excellent relationships with the children and their families. They lead by example in their interactions with children to establish a positive ethos.

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit and witnessing the excellent inclusive practice which is engrained across all aspects of school life. The school have continued to move from strength to strength in terms of its inclusive practice. I therefore recommend they continue to hold Flagship status. The next review will look closely at the further development of the Flagship Project and the school’s continued engagement with the Cluster Group.

**Assessor: Sarah Linari**

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

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