



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



<b>School</b>	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School Gautby Road Bidston Merseyside CH41 7DU
<b>Head/Principal</b>	Clare Higgins
<b>IQM Lead</b>	Paula Brás
<b>Date of Review</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> December 2022
<b>Assessor</b>	Sarah Linari

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

Cluster Group	CIN Northwest
Ambassador	Sarah Linari
Next Meeting	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2023
Meeting Focus	Attendance, wellbeing (staff and pupils), marking and feedback and sensory integration.

### **Cluster Attendance**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Spring 2022</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> March 2022	Yes
<b>Summer 2022</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	No
<b>Autumn 2022</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	Yes

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

The IQM Co-ordinator and staff at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School enjoy working with the Cluster Group. Following the meeting at Faith Primary School in the spring term, the IQM Lead delivered a staff meeting on creating more 'zen' or 'hygge' environments and they have introduced essential oil diffusers into communal areas. The IQM Lead enjoyed the meeting at Lord Derby Academy where the focus was one transition from Key Stage 2-3 processes. They feel that it, "was very powerful in delivering the message of good communication between schools throughout this process, in particular the importance of written transitional documentation".

The staff at Holy Cross are outward facing and willing to support other schools in the pursuit of a shared goal of inclusive education for all children. Next academic year, they would be willing to host a Cluster Group Meeting to share their excellent practice of parental support programmes and the Cradle to Career Project.



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### **Evidence**

- IQM Flagship review documentation
- Ofsted report
- National performance data
- School website
- School environment audit
- Inclusion data
- Early Language Project Timetable
- Observation of Early Language Project Intervention
- Observation of the Sanctuary Lunchtime Intervention

### **Meetings held with:**

- Headteacher (HT)
- IQM Coordinator/Deputy Headteacher (DHT)/Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator (SENDCo)
- Foundation Stage Two Teacher
- Teaching Assistants (TA)
- Pupils
- Engage and Change Company Director
- Parent/carer
- Cradle to Career Project Manager
- Cradle to Career Project Officer

### Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

#### Project Title: Communication and Language Project (Cradle to Career)

The Cradle to Career Project brings together eight schools from across the North Birkenhead area with the aim to, “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 Project Manager and Project Officer from Cradle to Career were in Holy Cross on the day of the review for one of their regular meetings with the staff to evaluate the progress of the project and discuss next steps. The Headteacher explained how the Cradle to Career Project Leads work with local Headteachers towards shared goals for the community they serve. The collaborative project intends to upskill the local community in order for there to be long-term, sustainable improvements to the quality of life in the area.

The Cradle to Career Project Manager described how the project, “reflects the needs within the community”. They support the schools through identifying the needs, which are currently literacy and early years language development, then create an action plan which involves bringing in experts from the specific field of the identified needs to work with the school staff. The long-term goal is to close the disadvantaged gap in the identified areas to bring the pupils' outcomes in line with national averages.

At Holy Cross, the Head Start intervention is funded through the Cradle to Career Project. This intervention is targeted at children who have varied needs but with a significant focus on those with self-regulation difficulties. The intention is for most children to attend the intervention with the hope of then being able to integrate back into the mainstream class. For others, the intervention may provide the pathway towards a more specialist provision and support. The IQM Co-ordinator explained that, “the morning consists of a timetable covering the prime areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, with a view to putting the foundations in place to support those children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)”.

Additionally, the Head Start programme focusses on speech and language development. The school works closely with Dr Helen Bibby, an Education Consultant who specialises in Early Years and SEND. She models the activities for the Teaching Assistants (TAs) and staff at Holy Cross, which they subsequently implement into the daily programme. The school also works closely with Talk About Town Ltd., an independent paediatric Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) service who devise individual SALT plans for the children involved in the project. All children are screened using the Wellcomm assessment tool with individual targets and interventions planned around the results of the screening.

During the review day, I observed the Head Start intervention taking place in the hall. The staff were delivering a session to develop pupils' listening and understanding skills by responding to two-level instructions. Through the activity, they were learning to take turns too. The activities are sensory-based and support pupils' physical development as well as their speech and language. The pupils take part in the intervention each morning then join their class for the afternoon lessons. It was clear from observing the intervention taking place that the children benefit greatly from the programme. The level of needs is high; without this bespoke support these pupils would not be able to access a mainstream school. The parent of one of the children who takes part in the intervention said, “it has been brilliant” for their child who has now been discharged from the hospital speech and language programme due to how well she is progressing at school.



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The IQM Lead would like to construct a purpose-built 'hub' for the intervention to take place in as it currently uses the hall, which is not ideal as it means other classes cannot access the space during the morning. The IQM Lead has a clear vision for how the 'hub' would be designed to best suit the needs of the children and specific interventions. During the review, I suggested that the IQM Lead and Headteacher visit one of our IQM Flagship schools, Ysgol Glan Gele, to visit their outdoor 'family hub' building to see how it is utilised throughout the day for intervention with children as well as parent and carer workshops. It would also be interesting to observe Glan Gele's Read Write Inc. extra intervention, a bespoke intervention designed by Glan Gele staff to provide a sensory approach to learning phonics. This type of intervention could be incorporated into the Head Start programme.

The evidence provided during the review process demonstrates the positive impact of this Flagship Project on improving pupils' communication and language skills which will ultimately allow them to access the curriculum and have a more successful future.

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

**Project title: Develop pupils' vocabulary acquisition across the curriculum.**

The recent Ofsted report identified vocabulary teaching as an area for development:

"In some subjects, the curriculum does not systematically develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. As a result, at times, some pupils have difficulty expressing what they have learned orally and in writing. Leaders should review how the development of vocabulary is integrated into each subject so that this aspect of literacy does not limit how well pupils achieve."

Therefore, the Flagship Project will focus on vocabulary development.

Through the project, the Leaders aim to promote vocabulary development across the curriculum. The project will include aspects of staff training to maximise staff knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary and teaching strategies. The IQM Lead is also researching whole-school vocabulary initiatives to promote the learning of vocabulary with pupils and families. Leaders will also research strategies and projects to support pupils' oracy development.

During the review, we discussed the opportunity for the IQM Lead and Headteacher to visit some of our other IQM Flagship schools who have previously carried out Flagship Projects on vocabulary development to observe best practice.



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### Overview

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average primary school with one hundred and forty-seven pupils aged three to eleven years old currently on roll. The school is situated in North Birkenhead, an area of high deprivation. With around 70% of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), the school has more than triple the number of disadvantaged pupils than the national average. The number of children who receive additional support for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is also significantly above the national average.

In a recent Ofsted inspection in October 2022, the overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be 'good', showing improvements across all areas since the previous inspection. The report recognises Holy Cross' inclusive ethos, with pupils' personal development and wellbeing identified as a strength, highlighting how they are, "central to the work of leaders and teachers". The report also details that, "pupils are proud to be part of this calm, caring, happy and purposeful school". Each time I visit the school, the behaviour of the children is excellent and the environment is always calm, almost a juxtaposition of many of the pupils' lives outside of school.

In view of the comprehensive support offered to families, Holy Cross serves as more than a school in the local area. For some, it is the only constant, safe place where families can seek help and advice. The phrase, 'above and beyond', does not do justice to the work undertaken by the staff at Holy Cross to support the parents and carers. From relentless phone calls to compel action to deal with social housing issues, to ensuring that other agencies implement the necessary assistance where there are wellbeing and safeguarding issues, the staff will do whatever is needed to help their families. The staff do anything within their power to get the children and the families the support they require.

To offer additional support to the parents and carers of children with SEND, the school holds a fortnightly coffee afternoon. In a meeting to represent parents and carers, one parent talked about how invaluable the SEND coffee afternoons are, stating that they, "keep me sane". The afternoons provide parents and carers with the chance to offload and share experiences. External professionals are sometimes invited to attend the sessions to offer additional support and advice to families. A representative from Positivitree, a locally based social enterprise charity, has recently been working with the parents and carers of the SEND group. On the Positivitree website, their mission is outlined as, "to empower parent-carers with self-care tools and experiences which improve wellbeing". They are currently offering the parents and carers peer mentoring courses to enable them to support other parents of children with SEND.

Parents and carers are also well supported by the school in terms of their mental health and wellbeing. They say, "if we have any problems we can come in and speak to the staff". One parent describes the school as, "my support network" and cannot, "praise the school enough". All staff are friendly and relatable. They put parents and carers at ease, creating an open relationship, whereby they feel comfortable to approach Holy Cross staff, should they be facing any difficulties.

In addition to the comprehensive emotional and wellbeing support the school offers its parents and carers, there are also opportunities for them to complete qualifications which will help improve their quality of life, as well as that of their children. The most recent course on offer was a Level One qualification on Drug and Alcohol Awareness. The six-week course was led by staff from Engage and Change, a Liverpool-based alternative education company. The course included educational sessions combined with fitness classes to encourage healthier lifestyles. Engage and Change's Director met with me on the review day to discuss the programme. When asked about the impact, he explained how the course sessions are, "much more than the work material itself". The participants, "talk about their issues", with the sessions becoming therapeutic as well as informative.

Engage and Change continues to work with the children as part of a preventative strategy. The idea is to work with young people from areas of high deprivation, such as North Birkenhead, to educate them and try to prevent future issues, such as exclusions from school, antisocial behaviour in the community or involvement in criminal activity. The Liverpool One Foundation provides the funding for Year 5 and 6 pupils at Holy Cross to access this beneficial intervention programme. As part of the Engage and Change programme, the pupils participate in gym sessions at the specialist gym in Liverpool. The Company Director from Engage and Change talked about how their aim is, "to instil positive fitness habits in children and teach them to not feel intimidated when walking into a gym from a young age". The Engage and Change staff also deliver Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education lessons at Holy Cross about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Education and raising awareness from a young age aims to help break the cycle of poor health and substance abuse within the local area.

Pupils' wellbeing is the number one priority at Holy Cross. To teach the children strategies to help look after their own mental health and wellbeing, the school has recently introduced the '*myHappyMind*' intervention programme. It has initially been introduced in Year 6 as a trial, with a plan to evaluate the impact, then implement it into the other year groups next term. In discussions with the pupils, the children said they are enjoying the session where they, "learn about parts of our brains and how we react in different situations. One child said that the programme, "teaches us how to deal with stuff and make better decisions". They enjoy not only the scenarios which they discuss as a group but also learning the support strategies, such as writing a journal, which they can use outside of lessons.

The highlight of the review day has to be meeting with the pupils. They are all very friendly and welcoming; a true credit to the school. All pupils said they feel safe at school and that the, "staff are really nice" as they are, "there for you when you need help". Through discussions with the pupils, the extent to which the school is genuinely transforming their lives became apparent. When asked what the best aspect of the school is, one pupil said, "our learning. We can all access it and the teachers help you and everyone gets to learn". Another child explained that they enjoy maths lessons because, "when you have a job, you can count how much money they should give you and know if they are taking the right amount from you (tax)". They all agreed that the best thing about Holy Cross is, "the teachers and staff" as, "they are very supportive when you need it, especially the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher who are really understanding and get what situation we are in". The children are well cared for by the adults at the school and they know Holy Cross is a safe place.





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Pupils' wider experience is a key focus as the Leaders recognise the need to provide the children with a variety of enriching experiences which they would not otherwise get outside of school. To develop pupils' cultural capital, the staff have devised a 'bucket list' of eighteen activities the children will complete from when they join Holy Cross in the Nursery to when they leave at the end of Year 6. The eighteen activities are additional to the regular enrichment experiences within the curriculum and include a theatre visit, beach visit, the chance to be a zookeeper for a day at Chester Zoo, being an artist for the day, den building and kite flying.

With a large number of the pupils and families living in poverty, Christmas can be an extremely challenging time financially. During the review day, I witnessed the library being transformed into Father Christmas' grotto. Many of the families would not be able to afford to visit Father Christmas so the Leaders decided to provide the experience for free in school. Over the final week of term, pupils will be visiting the grotto in class to listen to stories read by Father Christmas and at the Christmas Fair, children will be able to pay Father Christmas a visit and receive a small gift. This is further testament to how thoughtful and caring the staff are at Holy Cross.

It is clear from the review process that the staff at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School continue to be fully committed to inclusive education, with many areas of excellent practice. I therefore recommend that the school retains its Flagship status and is reviewed again in twelve months' time. I am confident their Flagship Project will have a hugely positive impact on providing exceptional provision to further support the children. Thank you to all for such an enjoyable and informative day at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School.

**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