



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School	Farnworth C of E Primary School Pit Lane Widnes Cheshire WA8 9HS
Head/Principal	Ms Heather Whitfield (Interim Headteacher)
IQM Lead	Ms Heather Whitfield
Date of Review	10th July 2024
Assessor	Ms Roanne Clements-Bedson

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group	Gardeners
Ambassador	Ms Sarah Linari
Next Meeting	To be confirmed
Meeting Focus	To be confirmed

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Summer 2022	7th July 2022	Yes
Autumn 2022	4th October 2022	Yes
Spring 2023	1st March 2023	Yes
Summer 2023	15th June 2023	Yes
Autumn 2023	17 th October 2023	Yes
Spring 2024	22 nd March 2023	Yes
Summer 2024	2nd May 2024	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group

The Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) Co-ordinator is fully committed to collaboration with the Cluster Group. She is a core group member, regularly attending and sharing inclusive ideas and practice. The school is demonstrably committed to the value that membership of IQM brings through Cluster attendance and is a much-valued member of the group.



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Evidence

- IQM Flagship Review documentation.
- School website.
- Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) Report May 2023.
- Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report May 2024.

Additional Activities:

- Tour of school with Year 6 School Council representatives.
- Observation visits to classrooms across the school.

Discussions held with:

- Senior Leaders.
- Flagship Project Leads.
- Leaders of the next Flagship Project.
- Pupil representatives.



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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The purpose of Farnworth Primary School's Flagship Project was to develop children's understanding of the learning process. The skills developed were intended to include resilience of learning, relationship management, self-regulation, critical thinking, information ordering and deductive reasoning.

'Embedding metacognition and positive mental attitude towards learning and self-worth' has been the IQM Flagship Project for the last two years and is already embedded in practice. Originally, Senior Leaders employed the services of external specialists to lead the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) towards becoming a Thinking School. Once the underpinning principles around the science of the brain had been explored with staff, it was decided that the level of motivation and expertise within the school was enough to drive its implementation and keeping the development 'in-house' would enable leaders to evolve a version of 'Thinking School' that fits their context.

The school has aimed to develop learners' independence, resilience and motivation to push their limits. Leaders shared their belief that giving children the skills of independence and being interdependent learners, the ability to select and access their learning resource and the urge to seek their own lines of inquiry, would all equip pupils to successfully transition to the next stage of education.

Children have 'Thinking Books' which are, "for pupils' eyes only." Pupils use these to organise their thinking, draft sentences and apply strategies such as thinking maps. There is freedom for children to use them however suits them best. Children I met told me, "our 'Thinking Books' are a chance for us to make mistakes and test out ideas." They appreciated this stage of learning, being comfortable with uncertainty and talking about learning as a process. I was privileged to be able to peep inside a couple of the children's books and was so impressed with the depth of thinking that was being recorded and the value that children placed on their thinking books. Children also told me about their Maths journaling, another opportunity for them to immerse themselves in the thinking process, select their strategies and try out different methods.

'Thinking Maps' is another strategy that I saw exemplified throughout the school. Children record not only what they know but also where they have learnt it. This provides an opportunity for them to reflect on the learning process and encourages a deeper consideration of themselves as learners. In Year 2, children explored a range of source material about the Titanic and applied 'Thinking Maps' to record their learning and their source material. They were fascinated by what they could learn from contemporaneous newspapers, menus and letters. Meanwhile, in Year 6, they were taking the idea of source material and existing knowledge a step further. Having watched a video about the Ancient Greeks, they were asked to record, "what information did you already know that helped you to understand the video?" and "what information were you given there that backed up your knowledge?" This type of higher-level questioning is typical of the aims of the school to encourage deeper thinking and extended answers. It was fascinating to sit in another highly engaging lesson that challenged children's thinking. In Year 5, children examined the back stories of three well-known fictional villains and had to consider their preconceptions in light of new information, reflecting on the question, "who decides who's evil and who's good?"



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Children's respect for each other was evident as they listened attentively to each other's opinions and considerately shared their own.

A further example of metacognitive practice is the use of 'Thinking Hats', with teachers identifying for children which type of thinking they are doing, associated with a specific hat colour. Children explained, "they help us with different ways of learning and thinking." In a Year 6 class, the children were recording their responses to a section of the story. Using 'Thinking Hats' to prompt them, the teacher said they should, "think about which way you want to look at it and do it in a way that is meaningful for you." They had reflection time to record their thoughts thoroughly before sharing them with others. Referring to 'Thinking Hats' helped the pupils identify what thinking had led to their interpretation of the text. The next step of the project is for teachers to look at the curriculum and match 'Thinking Hats' and 'Thinking Maps' to different content. It was inspiring that in just two years, staff and children have already embedded so much 'Thinking School' practice, yet there is still a drive to make strategies even more meaningful.

Children told me about the, "power of yet," and the impact of the Learning Pit, which is displayed in every classroom as a reminder that, with a growth mindset, "stuck is good." The Marking Policy has been adapted to reflect this more positive way of thinking about the learning journey. Marking is often done with the children, rather than to them, and additional learning tasks can be set straightaway to address any misconceptions. Children are encouraged to self-assess by reflecting on the process of learning, for instance, "I was able to do this because..." For effective self-assessment, reflection sheets provide sentence starters to prompt children to reflect on a specific aspect of their learning. They are also asked to peer-assess each other's work, identifying specific areas of strength and capacity for development. Teachers reported that marking is now more purposeful with children taking ownership of their learning and development.

School leaders told me, "children are more interested in the world now. They are doing better than when the focus was more on grades." An unplanned benefit of the Flagship Project was the impact on staff. I heard from teachers that, "as a staff, we have become more growth mindset. We have been empowered to take ownership of aspects of school development and we have all grown a lot."

To summarise the impact of the previous Flagship Project, it is evident that leaders have transformed the way that pupils think about their learning. Children are confident to talk about the learning process and enthusiastic about the strategies to help their thinking. Thanks to a tremendous staff team approach, metacognition is fully embedded in the daily life of the school.



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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

New Project Title: Effect of Bereavement on Child Development

The Headteacher and staff have decided to refocus the Flagship Project. In the rationale for the new project, the Headteacher articulates that, “as a school, we are aware of several children and staff who are going through or have previously gone through bereavements. We are also aware of the fact that bereavement can occur at any stage of a child’s school career and it can appear in a multitude of ways. This can have an impact on their education and development. Staff at Farnworth are only too aware of the impact, from poor attendance to withdrawal in lessons, children being unable to control their emotions and feeling lost in the system. Bereavement can present in several ways; from the death of a parent to parents separating, family members being diagnosed with terminal illnesses and the loss of a beloved family pet. Bereavement does not present in the same way for everyone. We as a school strive to create a team of people who are trained in this matter. We will thus be able to decant this training to the rest of the staff team at Farnworth, working together as a school team to support our pupils and staff in times of need.”

The next project aims to create a ‘Bereavement Aware’ culture in the school and beyond in the wider community. Lead teachers for the project are highly motivated by their own experience of supporting pupils and colleagues through the bereavement process. They are now keen to develop a proactive approach throughout the school so that everyone feels equipped to deal with this sensitive subject.

The project is expected to run for at least two years. It has been well thought-through and starts with establishing the policy and organisational structure which will underpin its future development. This will involve writing a Bereavement Policy, one that is bespoke to the context of Farnworth C of E Primary School. A staff ‘Bereavement Team’ will undertake training and draw on their own experience to train and support staff across the school. It is recognised by project leaders that bereavement for children can include a whole spectrum of experiences including loss, change and separation. They want to ensure that there is a consistent understanding and approach throughout the school, with access to more specialist knowledge as needed.

Leaders are also keen that the subject of bereavement is reflected through the school curriculum, resources and reading materials. During this first year, staff will work together to examine their curriculum topics and identify where they touch on issues around bereavement. They intend to use this understanding to map the subject through each year group, planning for progression and a shared understanding of how to approach the subject in an age-appropriate way, building on prior knowledge. By including such an important subject in the taught curriculum, they hope to equip pupils with skills that they can draw on when they need them, or when their friends need support. The leaders for the next Flagship Project have already begun to identify expert external agencies who produce teaching materials on the subject of bereavement and they are eager to begin compiling books that deal with the subject in ways that even young children will be able to relate to.



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Moving forward with the project, leaders are keen to extend its scope so that adults within the school and families beyond it, can also access support from an appropriately trained, knowledgeable and empathetic staff team.

Having seen the passion for this project from its leaders, I do not doubt that it will be highly impactful to the whole school community. It is something that I hope they will be able to share with their IQM Cluster Group in the future.



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Overview

Farnworth Church of England (CofE) Primary School has been visited by inspectors from Ofsted and from the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) since its last IQM Flagship Review. Both inspection reports testify to the inclusive ethos of the school. "Members of the school community speak highly of the effective support they receive. They feel loved in a deeply inclusive environment. It is a cheerful and positive place to be," says the inspector for SIAMS, while the Ofsted Report, observes, "Farnworth is not just a school. It is a family. Pupils feel that they are well cared for and the relationships between pupils and staff are positive and respectful."

One of the many wonderful children I met during my visit to Farnworth C of E Primary School, summed up the school beautifully, "our motto is Learn, Laugh, Love - which means we learn together in a fun way and we make sure everyone's got a voice and their own opinion."

My assessment day started with a tour of the school by Year 6 representatives from the School Council. What a fabulous introduction it was! The children exuded pride and love for the school that has equipped them so well for the next stage of their education. They were fun, articulate and appreciative of how lucky they were to be part of such a wonderful school community.

Every inch of Farnworth C of E Primary School is beautifully presented, with dazzling artwork decorating nearly every wall space. Children told me about the visiting Art teacher who has taught them so many techniques and such a range of artists and art movements. Year 1 had a display of Paul Klee-inspired work; Year 5 had 3D work on display after Claus Oldenburg; and Year 6 had stunning artworks using the wet felting technique. Other displays show examples of writing across a range of curriculum subjects. The displays are beautiful and changed regularly to reflect the children's recent work and learning, giving them a real sense of pride and incentive to produce their best. For instance, Year 2 has recently learned about the Titanic and has created a very impressive display of models of the ship, meticulously detailed.

Across the school, areas have been carefully considered to provide opportunities for kindness, friendship and reflection. Outside is a Quiet Garden where children can go to read or whisper with a friend. Inside, there is a Friendship Area, a cosy cushioned space to spend time if you are feeling low. There is also a lovely Prayer Area with boxes to suggest different ways to pray. The grounds outside include Forest School areas, which are accessed weekly by Reception and Key Stage 1 (KS1) and regularly by older classes. Children said they are sometimes given time to play in the forest and other times they have a 'treat' of hot chocolate and s'mores.

On the tour, we came across rehearsals for the Year 6 Leavers' Play, to be performed the following week. As well as being very well organised, what was striking was the obvious respect between children. While a few were delivering their lines on stage, the rest formed a supportive audience, patiently getting ready for their turn and rooting for each other. There was an industrious small team of backstage pupils as well, and lots of good humour was evident between everyone.



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The School Council ambassadors told me about the opportunities that children in the school are given to take on additional responsibilities. There is a heart-warming display outside the Reception classroom, showing Year 6 children with their Reception 'buddies'. They explained that they help to settle their little buddies into school at the start of Reception and then continue to meet with them every Friday to play or read. Either they go to the Reception classroom or the little ones make the journey up to Year 6. What a lovely way to demonstrate the school's expectations with a caring, family approach! Children also take on the role of Vision Ambassadors (who lead special assemblies), Eco-Warriors (taking the lead on energy-saving) and Junior Safety Officers (sharing messages on Internet and Water safety). Developing their voice and meaningful leadership is part of wider links to the 'Thinking School' project across the whole life of the school.

Children also benefit from a rich variety of creative and performance opportunities. During my visit, Year 2 children and staff were all dressed fabulously in traditional story costumes, for a trip to perform at Halton Music Festival's 'Terrific Tales Concert'. Everyone's excitement as they left was joyous! Other year groups have different opportunities each year. Children proudly told me that Year 3 has keyboard sessions with 'Musical Sue' to perform at the Christmas Church Service; Year 4 learns dance skills to perform with the Halton Primary Arts Network; Year 5 has drumming workshops and the older children learn Gospel singing to perform in a Christmas Concert in Warrington's Parr Hall. It is not surprising that when asked to sum up the school, one pupil said, "it is inspiring," and another added, "there are so many opportunities."

Trips and visitors are selected to broaden children's understanding and experiences. As a Church of England school, the majority of children attending Farnworth Primary also attend the local church, with which it has strong links. School Leaders recognise the challenge that this could pose in terms of promoting diversity, but instead see it as an opportunity to use children's deep knowledge of Christianity as a springboard to learn about other world religions. Children visit a local Synagogue and Mosque and the school invites regular visitors from the Islamic and Jewish faiths, even hosting an annual interfaith panel to share their experiences and connections. This shows an inspiring commitment to promoting respect and understanding, which helps the children to grow as thoughtful, respectful and well-rounded global citizens.

The nurturing ethos of the school has an excellent effect on relationships between pupils. I observed so much care and respect. Describing behaviour at Farnworth, a Year 5 child told me, "now we are older, we do not have to rely on a teacher to sort out disagreements; we can do it ourselves and we only have to go to the teacher if it did not work." Children are accepting and respectful of each other. They also overwhelmingly exhibit a confidence and self-assuredness that often belies their age. The range and quality of experiences and opportunities afforded at the school have a positive impact on children's sense of self.

It was an absolute joy to visit Farnworth Church of England Primary School and to see the pride in the school demonstrated by children of all ages as well as staff and Senior Leaders. Everyone has a shared sense that they all belong somewhere, wonderful ... and they are right!



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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 Roanne Clements-Bedson

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