



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School	Farnworth C of E Primary School Pit Lane Widnes Cheshire WA8 9HS
Head/Principal	Mrs Steph Kidd
IQM Lead	Mrs Heather Whitfield
Date of Review	9 th July 2026
Assessor	Mr David Clay

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group	Gardeners
Ambassador	Mrs Sarah Linari
Next Meeting	TBC

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Spring 2025	13 th February 2025	Yes
Summer 2025	23 rd June 2025	No
Autumn 2025	19 th November 2025	Yes
Spring 2026	3 rd February 2026	Yes
Summer 2026	18 th June 2026	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Farnworth CE Primary School remains a committed and highly valued member of its IQM cluster and continues to demonstrate how meaningful collaboration can support both school improvement and the wider development of inclusive practice. Throughout the year, staff have embraced opportunities not only to learn from others but also to share their own expertise, reflecting the school's genuine commitment to collaborative professional learning.



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The school proudly hosted the first cluster meeting of the academic year, providing colleagues with the opportunity to see the early implementation of OPAL play and learning within the school's own context. This enabled staff to openly share both the successes and challenges associated with introducing such a significant whole-school initiative, generating valuable professional dialogue and encouraging other schools to consider similar developments. Visitors commented on the passion and commitment of staff, whose child-centred approach and determination to provide the very best experiences for every pupil were immediately evident. This culture of putting children at the heart of every decision was equally apparent throughout the review day.

The Spring cluster meeting provided a valuable opportunity for staff to visit a very different educational setting, exploring specialist provision supporting children experiencing Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA). Experiencing an alternative model of inclusive practice encouraged thoughtful professional reflection and reinforced Farnworth's own relational approach to supporting vulnerable pupils. In particular, the philosophy that "every interaction is an intervention" resonated strongly with staff, alongside the setting's unwavering commitment to personal development, character education and collective responsibility for every child. These ideas have helped to further strengthen thinking around inclusive practice within the school.

The final cluster meeting, held as part of the North West Collaborative Event at Edge Hill University, provided further opportunities to engage with current research and innovative practice. Staff were particularly inspired by the Bright Leaders presentation, recognising its potential to inform the school's next phase of Flagship development. The ideas shared have already been discussed within the Senior Leadership Team and are helping to shape thinking around leadership development and strategic pupil participation, ensuring that the school's future work continues to be informed by both research and collaboration.

Evidence

- School's website
- IQM Flagship Evaluation of Progress and Action Plan
- Ofsted report
- Documentation relating to the school's IQM journey
- Pupil books

Meetings held with:

- Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- IQM Lead
- New Senior Leadership Team for September 2026
- OPAL Leadership Team
- Thrive Practitioners
- ELSA Practitioner
- Staff representatives
- Pupil representatives



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- Parent representatives
- Governor representatives

Additional Activities

- Learning walk and lesson visits across the school.
- Observation of OPAL play in action.
- Observation of sensory circuits.
- Observation of a *My Happy Minds* lesson.



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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

Farnworth CE Primary School continues to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to ensuring that children's emotional wellbeing sits at the heart of every decision it makes. The school has developed a truly cohesive, whole-school approach in which emotional wellbeing is viewed not as an isolated intervention but as a fundamental prerequisite for successful learning and personal development. Through high-quality teaching, carefully planned universal provision and highly targeted intervention, supported where appropriate by external agencies, the school has created a culture where every child is known, valued and supported to flourish.

During the past year, this provision has continued to develop at pace as leaders have carefully considered how every aspect of the school day can contribute positively to children's wellbeing. One of the most significant developments has been the transformation of lunchtime provision through the implementation of OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning). Recognising the potential of unstructured times to support emotional regulation, resilience and social development, leaders have created rich outdoor environments where children can climb trees, explore woodland spaces, build dens, engage in imaginative play within mud kitchens and develop creativity through open-ended experiences in nature. The positive impact of this work was evident throughout the review. Pupils enthusiastically described lunchtime as "the best time of the day", while another commented that they were "living their best life". The calm, purposeful atmosphere and the quality of interactions observed demonstrated how effectively the school has used play to strengthen relationships, develop resilience and support emotional wellbeing.

This relational approach extends well beyond the playground. Farnworth has deliberately fostered a culture of belonging through carefully planned opportunities for pupils to support one another. The Reception and Year 6 buddy system exemplifies this ethos, providing meaningful opportunities for older pupils to nurture younger children while simultaneously developing their own leadership, empathy and responsibility. It was a pleasure to observe these relationships during the learning walk, with one younger pupil describing buddy time as "the best time of my week". These authentic relationships contribute significantly to pupils' sense of security, belonging and confidence across the school community.

A further strength of the school's provision is the successful implementation of the My Happy Minds programme, which has become firmly embedded within the wider curriculum for personal development. Rather than simply responding to difficulties when they arise, the programme provides all children with a shared language and understanding of emotional wellbeing, enabling them to recognise, understand and regulate their emotions. During the review, a Year 2 lesson demonstrated the impressive confidence with which pupils discussed their feelings, explained how their brains work and described strategies, including Happy Breathing, that helps them regulate their emotions. These approaches are reinforced throughout the school through calm corners and other classroom strategies, ensuring that emotional regulation becomes part of everyday learning rather than a separate intervention. As a result, My Happy Minds is successfully strengthening universal protective factors, including self-awareness, self-



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esteem, relationships and aspiration, reducing reliance on reactive intervention and promoting positive wellbeing for all pupils.

Alongside this universal provision, Farnworth continues to faithfully embed the Thrive approach across the school. Children's emotional wellbeing is assessed systematically each term, enabling experienced Thrive practitioners and the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) to identify need early and tailor support accordingly. Staff reflected that the assessment process revealed levels of need that had previously gone unnoticed, allowing intervention to become increasingly precise and responsive. Supported fully by the Senior Leadership Team, practitioners are empowered to adapt their timetables according to emerging need, ensuring that support reaches the children who require it most.

The impact of this strategic approach is already becoming evident. Staff spoke confidently about the significant reduction in the number of pupils requiring intensive intervention alongside noticeable improvements in children's emotional wellbeing across the school. Leaders have created a culture in which emotional wellbeing is everyone's responsibility, whilst also investing in specialist expertise that enables practitioners to make a measurable difference. In supporting children experiencing bereavement, staff explained how Thrive provides children with "the language to talk about it", enabling them to process difficult experiences within a safe, trusting environment. The dedicated Hub and library space further enhance this provision, offering calm, nurturing spaces where children can build resilience alongside skilled, compassionate adults.

Importantly, the school's commitment to emotional wellbeing extends beyond the school gates. Leaders recognise that supporting families is fundamental to sustaining positive outcomes for children. Through the effective use of Seesaw, parents are regularly informed about the wellbeing strategies being used in school and are provided with practical guidance to reinforce these approaches at home. This ongoing communication has strengthened partnerships with families and ensured that parents feel increasingly informed, involved and confident in supporting their children's emotional development.

Farnworth CE Primary School has successfully established a coherent, sustainable and highly effective approach to emotional wellbeing that is firmly embedded within the life of the school. Through visionary leadership, highly skilled practitioners and a deeply relational culture, emotional wellbeing is no longer viewed as an additional aspect of school life but as an integral part of enabling every child to flourish. The significant progress made throughout this Flagship project provides a strong platform from which the school can confidently move into the next phase of its inclusive development under its new leadership team.



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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

The school will continue to embed and further develop the highly effective approaches established through this year's Flagship project. Leaders are committed to ensuring that emotional wellbeing remains central to the school's inclusive culture and have secured funding to continue delivering the My Happy Minds curriculum, ensuring that universal provision continues to equip all pupils with the knowledge and strategies to understand and manage their emotional wellbeing.

As OPAL enters its second year of implementation, the school will continue to develop and enhance its outdoor learning and play environments, opening additional areas to provide even richer opportunities for exploration, creativity, resilience and positive social interaction. Alongside this, the school will continue to use its robust Thrive assessment process to monitor pupils' emotional wellbeing, evaluate the impact of interventions and ensure that provision remains responsive to the changing needs of its community.

Leaders also recognise the importance of sharing this exemplary practice more widely. Over the coming year, the school will develop a public-facing inclusion section on its website, showcasing its Thrive and My Happy Minds provision, referral pathways and the positive impact of its whole-school approach to emotional wellbeing. This will strengthen communication with families while providing an opportunity to share effective inclusive practice with other schools across the IQM network. The school has established exceptionally strong foundations from which this work can continue to flourish.

With the appointment of a new Deputy Headteacher and IQM Lead, the school now begins the next phase of its Flagship journey. Building upon the success of the previous project, the new Flagship focus will be driven by the school's Christian vision, "At Farnworth, we all grow together and we all have a voice." The project will seek to strengthen distributed leadership by creating authentic opportunities for pupils to influence decision-making, shape curriculum development and become active partners in the continued improvement of the school.

Building upon the successful work of the Vision Ambassadors, Eco Warriors and School Council, leaders will introduce a structured pupil participation framework that provides meaningful opportunities for influence at class, year group, whole-school and curriculum level. The school also intends to develop pupil subject leadership across all curriculum areas, ensuring that children play an increasingly significant role in evaluating learning, contributing ideas and supporting curriculum development alongside staff.

To enable all pupils to participate confidently, the school will implement a progressive oracy programme, equipping children with the communication skills needed to articulate their views, contribute thoughtfully to curriculum panels and influence decisions relating to both learning and wellbeing. By the end of the first year of the project, the school aims to ensure that every curriculum area has an active leadership team, with pupils working collaboratively alongside staff to drive continuous improvement.



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As this ambitious work develops, Farnworth is encouraged to continue drawing upon the expertise available within the IQM network by visiting schools where distributed pupil leadership is already well established. Sharing ideas, observing practice and collaborating with fellow Flagship schools will further strengthen the school's own development while enabling it, in turn, to contribute its own growing expertise to the wider IQM community.



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Overview

Farnworth Church of England Primary School continues to exemplify what it means to be a truly inclusive school community where every decision is rooted in the belief that "At Farnworth, we all grow together and we all have a voice." This vision is not simply displayed around the school but is evident in every interaction, every relationship and every aspect of school life. Throughout the review it was impossible not to notice the warmth that exists within the school community, where children, staff, governors and families work together to create an environment in which everyone feels valued, respected and empowered to succeed. Staff described the school as "my team" and "like my family", and this deep sense of belonging was reflected in the pride that both adults and children have in the Farnworth community they have created together.

One of the defining characteristics of Farnworth is its belief that leadership belongs to everyone. Leaders recognise the potential within every member of the school community and intentionally create opportunities for both adults and children to lead and make a meaningful contribution. As one member of the leadership team explained, "everyone should be able to be a leader." This philosophy was evident throughout the review. Whether listening to the Year 6 pupils confidently and eloquently leading the school tour, observing support staff leading whole-school developments in PSHE and phonics, or seeing the commitment of Wizzies, the community interest company responsible for the breakfast and after-school provision, it was clear that leadership is genuinely distributed. This shared ownership creates a culture where staff willingly go above and beyond for the children, continually striving to improve provision. The exceptional Year 1 phonics outcomes achieved this year are just one example of what can be achieved when every member of staff takes collective responsibility for improving outcomes for children.

Since the previous IQM review, the school has continued to strengthen its already outstanding inclusive practice whilst successfully navigating a period of leadership transition. Rather than slowing development, this has provided leaders with an opportunity to reflect upon the school's many strengths and carefully consider how these can be built upon over the coming years. There is a clear determination to maintain the school's exceptionally high standards whilst ensuring that every improvement remains centred on the needs of its children. This pursuit of excellence can be seen throughout the school: from the outstanding artwork produced through Halton's Primary Arts Network, to the ambitious Year 6 production, complete with impressive scenery, costumes and confident performances, and the remarkable transformation of the outdoor environment through the first year of OPAL. These experiences demonstrate leaders' commitment to ensuring that every child has opportunities to experience success, develop confidence and feel genuine pride in belonging to the Farnworth community.

Relationships remain the cornerstone of Farnworth's inclusive culture. Staff know their pupils exceptionally well and demonstrate an unwavering commitment to ensuring that every child feels safe, understood and able to succeed. During the learning walk there was a genuine warmth in the way adults and children interacted with one another. Leaders welcomed pupils each morning with smiles and conversations, while staff consistently modelled kindness, patience and high expectations. These values were



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reflected back by the children themselves, whose respect for adults and one another contributed to the calm, purposeful atmosphere evident throughout the school. The learning walk itself, confidently led by two Year 6 pupils, was a joy. Their enthusiasm was infectious as they proudly introduced the weekly class VIPs, children recognised for representing the values of their class. Watching these pupils explain their roles demonstrated the school's commitment to ensuring that every child feels recognised, valued and special. Their pride in both their responsibilities and their school was unmistakable.

This year's review particularly highlighted the school's unwavering commitment to emotional wellbeing, recognising that children learn best when they feel safe, valued and emotionally secure. As one child simply explained, "it's a really good place to get your education." Rather than viewing wellbeing as a discrete intervention, Farnworth has developed a coherent continuum of support that begins with high-quality universal provision before moving seamlessly into targeted interventions where required. The implementation of *My Happy Minds*, the continued development of Thrive and ELSA provision and the transformation of outdoor play through OPAL combine to create an environment where children develop the resilience, confidence and emotional understanding needed to thrive both academically and personally.

The introduction of OPAL has been particularly transformative. Leaders recognised that unstructured times presented an opportunity to further enhance pupils' wellbeing and successfully reimaged lunchtime as an extension of learning and personal development. Children now immerse themselves in imaginative play, woodland exploration, den building, creative construction and outdoor adventure, all of which foster independence, resilience, collaboration and joy. Listening to pupils describe lunchtime as "the best time of the day" and one child proudly explaining that they were "living their best life" provided perhaps the strongest evidence of the impact this initiative has had upon pupils' daily experiences. Watching children confidently manage risk by climbing trees, balancing on cable reels and exploring the outdoor environment was a pleasure. Even more striking, however, was seeing children of different ages naturally playing together, supporting one another and building relationships across the school community. OPAL has become far more than a play initiative; it has strengthened the school's already exceptional culture of belonging.

Throughout the review, pupil voice provided compelling evidence of the school's success. Children spoke with confidence, maturity and genuine pride about their school, articulating not only what they enjoy but why they feel valued as members of the Farnworth family. Their enthusiasm reflected a culture where children are listened to, encouraged to contribute and increasingly empowered to shape the life of the school. This provides a natural platform for the school's next Flagship project, which seeks to strengthen distributed leadership through authentic pupil participation, curriculum leadership and progressive oracy, ensuring that every child is equipped to influence both their own learning and the continued development of the school.

The wider curriculum continues to provide exceptionally rich opportunities for children to discover and develop their talents. High-quality artistic displays celebrate pupils' achievements across the curriculum, while music, performance, outdoor learning, leadership opportunities and enrichment experiences ensure that every child has



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opportunities to succeed beyond the classroom. The environment itself reflects these ambitions. Every space has been thoughtfully designed to support learning, creativity and wellbeing, creating a school that children clearly respect and are immensely proud to call their own. Perhaps most tellingly, despite the review taking place in the closing weeks of the academic year, every class remained eager to share their learning and talk enthusiastically about what makes Farnworth such a special place to belong.

Throughout the review there was a palpable sense of collective responsibility, with every adult demonstrating an unwavering commitment to ensuring that children receive the support they need to flourish. Conversations consistently reflected a culture where inclusion is viewed not as the responsibility of a few individuals but as the shared purpose of the entire school community. Governors demonstrated a genuine commitment to ensuring that these exceptionally high standards are not only maintained but continue to evolve as the school enters the next chapter of its journey. Their strategic oversight provides a secure foundation for the school's ambitious next Flagship project. This collective commitment, combined with thoughtful strategic leadership and a relentless focus on children's needs, places Farnworth in an exceptionally strong position as it embarks upon the next phase of its development.

It was once again a privilege to visit Farnworth Church of England Primary School. The school has successfully built upon the many strengths recognised during previous reviews whilst continuing to innovate, reflect and refine its inclusive practice. As it enters a new phase of leadership and embarks upon its next Flagship project, it does so from a position of considerable strength. The proposed focus on distributed leadership and authentic pupil participation is a natural progression for a school where leadership is already viewed as everyone's responsibility and every child is encouraged to find and use their voice.

I am therefore firmly of the opinion that the school continues to fully meet the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark's Inclusive School Award 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: Mr David Clay

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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