



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



School Name Exning Primary School
Oxford Street
Exning
Suffolk
CB8 7EW

Head/Principal Mr James Clark

IQM Lead Ms Ruth Clifford-Turner

Date of Review 10th July 2024

Assessor Ms Hazel J Simmons

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group MADIE B

Ambassador Mr Roger Leeke

Next Meeting TBC

Meeting Focus TBC

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2022	19 th October 2022	Yes
Spring 2023	7 th February 2023	No
Summer 2023	14 th June 2023	Yes
Autumn 2023	18 th October 2023	Yes
Spring 2024	14 th February 2024	Yes
Summer 2024	21 st May 2024	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group

The meeting at The Bridge Special School in Ipswich provided lots of ideas regarding therapeutic intervention and ideas for overcoming challenges regarding facilitating residential visits for children with significant needs.

At Thomas Gainsborough School (TGS), their ideas and methods regarding early help, pastoral care, and early inclusion in a senior, mainstream school, plus their communications systems for whole teams, will be useful, particularly when larger schools become members of the new Trust.

Evidence

- The school's report on annual targets and reflections on progress
- Academy transition documentation
- Published performance data
- Ofsted report
- School website
- School events calendars
- The learning walk of the entire school
- Parent survey
- Discussion with the Pupil Panel
- Discussions with teaching assistants
- Discussion with Governors
- Discussion with teachers
- Discussions with senior Leadership

Summary of Targets from 2023–2024

Target 1: To continue to investigate and instigate the academization process.

The process has been completed or achieved. The school has been granted an academy order and plans to convert on September 1, 2024, are established.

Next Steps:

- Exning will take a significant Leadership role in the expansion of the primary offer within the new EET Academy Trust. This includes the current Leadership taking on the roles of Director of Primaries and Primary Development Leaders. This is encompassed in Target 1 for 24/25.

Target 2: To develop a more widespread and strategic plan for working closely with a larger group of schools in a newly developed Trust.

Linked to Target 1. This is ongoing; the school has been working closely with several schools to discuss them becoming part of the new Trust and will continue to do so as part of Target 1 24/25.

Next Step:

- Now that the plans have been agreed upon with the lead schools and colleges and DfE approval has been granted, detailed strategic planning is underway, and discussions with other schools can begin openly and in earnest in September 2024.



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Target 3: To develop the role of the second SENCo to facilitate the school's wider impact on both Exning Primary School and other local schools.

This has been completed. SENCo is now shadowing the existing SENCo and Deputy, taking over key areas of the role. The formal SENCo qualification will be complete by the start of the autumn term.

Next Step:

- The role of co-SENCo will be formally activated in September 2024, enabling the existing SENCo to expand her remit as a Primary Development Lead in the new Trust.

Target 4: To strategically plan a wellbeing support package for staff, parents, Governors, and children, following our trial experience with OM consulting.

This has been achieved. OM has visited on three separate occasions, running three after-school sessions for staff. They have also run in-school workshops for all classes and provided 1-to-1 consultations for several parents, staff, and Governors. The feedback from participants, some of whom spoke to the assessor, is very positive.

Next Step:

- Outcome Measures (OM) is now contracted to carry out a scheduled series of personal consultations for parents and staff, plus CPD and classroom workshops, during the coming school year.

Agreed Targets for 2024-2025

Target 1: To work with a group of schools, from primary through to further education, with Exning Primary School taking a significant Leadership role in the expansion of the primary offer across the EET Academy Trust. This will take account of all age sectors and specialist provisions, facilitating an inclusive culture in each school and ensuring that all families feel supported and welcomed.

Comments

In the next academic year, three senior Leaders will take on additional responsibilities working across the whole Trust—working with other schools, attending meetings with senior Leadership teams in other schools, and with the Trust Governance.

Target 2: To work closely with Norfolk, Essex, Suffolk, Teacher Training (NESST), Anglia Ruskin, and the Cambridge University Faculty of Education to ensure that inclusion in all its forms is given the highest priority in the teacher training programs.



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Comments

The Deputy Head continues with and expands this work. Key components include:

- Delivering the NESST inclusion program in November.
- Attending the steering group meetings for NESST.
- Contributing to the Cambridge University PGCE inclusion sessions in November and March, and on the Primary English PGCE throughout the year.
- Exning Primary will also host student placements at the Hive SEND unit.

Target 3: To complete a whole-school development system, bringing staff into new Leadership roles so that the existing Leadership team can take on strategic outward-facing roles.

Comments

Senior Leaders continue to work together to give newly promoted Leaders (Co-Headteachers, Deputy Heads, and SENDCo) the confidence to undertake their roles independently through co-production of all duties for the next year by way of phased induction to ensure first-class service to all.

Target 4: By invitation, a school Leader at Exning Primary will partner with the Suffolk County Council Children and Family Services Team to support and improve the development of their systems, provisions, and outcomes for families.

Comments

Senior Leaders' active contributions to the Local Authorities Delivering Better Value (DBV) steering group and Educational Health Care Plan reform group, and attendance at Community Inclusion Forums, will continue.



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Overview

Exning Primary is a vibrant and inclusive school with high ambition for pupils, staff, the school, and the development of education practice more broadly. Over recent years, it has expanded in terms of the number of pupils, facilities, including a Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) specialist hub, and breadth of curriculum. The latest plans launch another leap forward for all stakeholders as the school will be at the centre of a new initiative, The Eastern Education Trust, which aims to build a network of schools that will benefit from the principle of an 'all-through' planning pathway—from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to Further Education (FE). The current Headteacher will take on the role of Area Director of Primaries while retaining significant leadership in the school, and other senior Leaders in the school population will take on increased responsibilities as groupwide Primary Development Leaders, and yet others, via interview, have been given internal promotions. The staff and Governors we met with during this assessment are excited and confident about these developments.

The school is oversubscribed, with applications every year from families far beyond the catchment area. Its popularity is the result of its excellent local reputation. In 2023, it was vastly over subscribed with 63 first choice places being requested for just 30 spaces. In terms of pupil outcomes, the latest published data shows that the percentage of pupils meeting expected standards in reading, writing, and maths far exceeded the national and local average, with outcomes in maths being particularly strong. As Ofsted noted in their report, 'Exning is a school that has got the balance right. Leaders focus on academic excellence. They also make sure pupils develop into happy, healthy, and well-rounded young citizens.'

The main building is Victorian, retaining the original master's house as an administration and staff area. Its reputation is not based on fabulous modern buildings but on pupil progress and, what parents state as, 'happiness'. In the last parent survey, 100% of parents said they would recommend the school, and the comments section is full of appreciative statements such as 'the school fosters a lovely sense of community and diversity' and a caring and nurturing environment.

The school occupies a deceptively large space, with a horticultural area containing a polytunnel, fruit trees, and raised vegetable beds; a mature Forest School that includes peer mentoring rooms; and extensive grass sports pitches, an orchard and an apiary beyond the main, well equipped and furnished, playgrounds. An independent nursery leases another, enclosed part of the site. In 2021, in conjunction with Suffolk County Council, the school added a Key Stage 1 SEND unit to the school. In their report, Ofsted asserted that 'the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met extremely effectively'. The Headteacher, who had limited personal experience with SEND before creating the unit, is committed to helping children who need extra help and claims that opening the SEND Hub 'is the best thing I've ever done'. The unit was intended to accommodate 12 students. However, there are currently 15 on the roster as a result of the pressure for additional SEND places. The school's philosophy is very much that if a child needs a place and if the school can meet that need, they will try to find ways to accommodate them, as they are driven to help pupils access a safe education above any other consideration.



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While the SEND facility is in separate, new construction, pupils are very much part of the main school. Their classroom is referred to as the 8th class, not a separate unit, and whenever it is safe and comfortable for the SEND children to do so, they access the main school facilities, including the playground at lunchtime and the dining hall. The school aims to provide as much opportunity for integration as possible, to increase the chance that some pupils will be able to transition into a future local mainstream provision when it is appropriate/available.

Peer mediation, fully implemented during the past year, has been a great success. The teacher who introduced the idea has now been trained by Calm Mediation Centre to deliver pupil training in school, so the sustainability of the program is assured. Teachers commented on how they had noticed a very real reduction in pupils coming to them about friendship issues or similar, preferring instead to go to a peer mediator. The established scheme includes ten trained Year 6 mediators, two of whom are on duty on any given day during break times. The current mentors told the assessor how they were now assisting newly appointed Year 5's to take on the role by providing a 'shadowing service' to them. While meeting with a group of students, a Year 3 pupil shared how she had used their service, describing the process and how it had resolved her unhappiness; she recommended it to other pupils. The success of the program has been recognised, and Exning Primary School has been nominated to receive the accolade of 'Peer Mediation Scheme of the Year' by the Civil Mediation Council.

Immediately before the opening of the specialist SEND unit, all staff were provided with SEND training. The school's idea was that it would firstly provide staffing flexibility so that, in the event of an absence, another teacher from the school could step in and provide a quality, appropriate learning experience. Secondly, the school recognised that SEND training had something to offer all classroom staff as children with some degree of special needs were present in all classrooms, and the skills utilised by SEND teachers offered valuable, transferable, with modification, strategies, and lastly, this would enable them to best facilitate the transition of students from the unit into mainstream classes, if that became appropriate. The success of this facility is evidenced in the pupil outcomes achieved. This year, every graduating Key Stage1 child has been helped to secure a place in an appropriate Key Stage2 setting. For some, this is at a special school, while others have transitioned into mainstream classes. One child who joined in Year 2, having been unable to access his prior placement, was helped to overcome his personal anxiety challenges in just one term and was spending time in the school's mainstream area. The staff are clear that pupils should feel that it is not a matter of them not being able to achieve certain skills but that they 'can't do it yet'.

The school is at the forefront of educational developments to incorporate personal technology into the primary classroom. Responding to the need to help pupils develop the digital skills that will be required in their adult worlds and also to help them develop the necessary resilience and know-how to manage the potentially harmful effects of technology, every pupil from Year 3 upwards is provided with a personal Chrome book. The school adopts a blended learning approach to technology use, ensuring that pupils' motor skills continue to develop, and that dialogic talk is used extensively, stating that the technology is 'just another tool to be used with other forms of learning'. Significant inclusion features are built into the technology offer: Colour overlays to help with Dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are



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available at any time; students have access to Clicker and speech-to-text recording. Teachers can monitor progress in real time, zoning in on specific students so that additional support can be given instantly via highlighting or voice notes. These devices are on full-time loan to pupils and can be taken home. Most importantly, the individual devices are provided free of charge to every pupil, thereby removing potential financial barriers and ensuring absolute equality of access for all.

School Leaders are proud of their approach to curriculum development, which combines collegiate working between subject Leaders and permits classroom teachers to be creative and use their skills and preferences to deliver the best possible learning while simply ensuring that the learning objectives specified in the National Curriculum are included along with the school's agreed content and desired outcomes. Although Maths Mastery is deployed across the school and the English Learners (ELs) phonics programme in Key Stage 1, the Leadership team is clear that they do not want to impose detailed methodologies on teachers as they believe this would discourage personal passion and creativity. To support non-specialist teachers, the school subscribes to some nationally recognised resources.

The core curriculum is supplemented with a wide range of social development and personal skills opportunities. This year, the school's annual 'Valuing Yourself and Others' week welcomed The Dogs Trust to give information about therapy dogs and safety around dogs. Other visitors included a visitor from a local Hindu organisation, the fire service, and the police, who gave instructions about road safety. The school deploys a county music service to provide instrument lessons to all pupils in Year 4. They have weekly clarinet lessons that lead to three public performances a year, including participation with other schools at the highly regarded Snape concert hall. Exning Primary School's incorporation of technology, where it is beneficial, can be seen in their use of virtual reality headsets that are used to give pupils immersive experiences of historical settings, such as World War I trenches and the streets of the Great Fire of London, or other worlds, such as beneath the ocean. The school admits to using them to provide pupils with pure fun experiences as well, such as sleigh rides for Year 1 pupils! A specialist sports coach teaches across the school and manages lunchtime clubs, and the school is currently developing a career skills program, which may include a collapsed timetable on Friday afternoons to facilitate class grouping for visits by employers and skills specialists.

Makaton sign language is used as a component of a total communication strategy in the Hive. It is also starting to be used across the school, as the wider advantages have been recognised. One child recently made a video book review and used Makaton as he was aware that another child in the class had a hearing impairment, demonstrating how the ethos of caring about inclusivity has been cascaded to pupils.

The Governing board is highly experienced and includes a wide range of expertise, including local business people, teachers, parents, and Local Authority appointed members. The Governor's interview fully endorsed the school's Leadership, stating that 'the head's management skills are exceptional', and commending his 'human touch because he cares and is committed'. A board member added, 'The whole top team is stellar'. The school is not currently part of a Trust and thus has had the autonomy to make decisions and has been able to do so at speed if needed.



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The Governor with responsibility for diversity and SEND described how each member of the Governing board was tasked with a specific responsibility for a specific area, such as assessment or curriculum, and how they provided a professional challenge to the school in these areas, carried out evaluations in the school, and contributed to decision-making.

During the assessment, another Governor, who had recently carried out a deep dive into reading, expressed how impressed he had been by the seamless way that children with additional needs were seamlessly integrated into the class and the quality of the personalised plans and resources. He told the assessor that the Headteacher's mantra, 'no child shall be left behind', is something he 'feels' when he is in school. He particularly noted the inclusive behaviour of pupils as they assisted peers who required help without fuss, while those receiving help accepted it confidently.

The annual deep dive into children's voices evidence pupils' confidence about seeking help and even their insightful understanding that specific subject learning helps them understand topics that follow. Governors advised that, in their discussions with pupils and families, they are told that children like the school and that 'parents feel secure sending their children', to the school. The Governors particularly commended the total transparency they experienced, which they believe is a significant contributor to the fact that the school does not receive complaints from parents, along with the 'always available', stance of the Headteacher and the regular parent forums, which they also attend.

Reading and communication as a whole are given great importance. The school library is open to all at lunchtimes, and teachers can select periods to use the area to fit in with their class learning schedules. Nearby, the Atrium is filled with reading development resources. The school has created its reading progress scale, comprising very small steps and each benefiting from a basket of books that pupils can select from, as well as a separate series of books to support phonics progress. A Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA), who is also ELKLAN trained, has the role of Reading Specialist teacher and carries out reading interventions for identified pupils, supported by fourteen volunteers who work in the school guiding pupil reading. Year 5 pupils also engage in the process as expert volunteers, working with less confident Year 3 readers - a program that has proven to be very popular with both year groups.

The inclusion of staff and providing them with personal development opportunities is important to the school. Staff reported being happy and that 'no one wants to leave', commenting on how school Leaders were always 'interested to hear what they had to say' and giving examples of when their ideas had been implemented. Staff meeting during this assessment reported that the Headteacher, 'is very approachable' and one asserted that 'Nurturing!' should be written in capital letters across the front of the school. The school provides specialist training for those who wish to develop their skills and has previously sponsored a Teaching Assistant (TA) to become a Forest School Leader and another to complete Drawing and Talking training, which is a therapeutic tool that allows children to process emotional difficulties. Furthermore, previous TAs are currently training to be teachers with the school, and two middle Leaders are completing National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) qualifications before their promotion to joint Deputy Heads/Heads in the autumn term.

Staff asserted that the school is a very happy place. We laugh, and children laugh all the



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time. Wellbeing is important to the school. They have recently contracted a Health and Wellbeing specialist consultancy service that specialises in working with schools to provide staff, pupils, and even parents with access to confidential, personal consultations, as well as facilitate workshops with small groups of staff about issues such as menopause, stress, and the mental health of children. The decision to extend the offer to parents is based on the school's intention to offer a holistic service and understanding that difficulties outside of school affect pupils' ability to achieve in school.

This holistic approach to family welfare is also evident in the school's provision of financial assistance to any family in need, including subsidising school trips and clubs, so that no pupil is ever excluded. Wrap-around care includes a breakfast club and after-school provision until 6 p.m. daily. In addition to the extensive after-school club provision, holiday clubs are held at the school, run by an Exning Primary School HTLA. There are also days when specialist staffing provides holiday clubs for children with SEND. Support for parents is further evidenced by the school's provision of a free creche for parents wishing to attend events and performances.

The school's genuine desire to improve education and children's prospects extends far beyond their school gates, and their contribution to the regional and national agenda, as well as teacher training, is admirable. They have invited members on the panel, 'Delivering Better Value in SEND', a Department for Education initiative to create local working parties, 'looking at improvements to SEND services that are also financially sustainable'. A school Leader sits on the teaching and learning board of The London Grid for Learning (a charitable Trust interested in technology for schools) and has contributed to the development of training around digital tools to support inclusion, including sharing filmed case studies for the benefit of other schools. In the same field, Exning Primary School is a partner school of Edtech UK, an independent organisation—an advisory forum and strategic body—and will be hosting a regional seminar later this year. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) is an invited member of Suffolk's Special Education Services group that meets termly to discuss whole-school inclusion. Senior Leaders are given significant time to work with the Facility of Education in Cambridge, delivering lectures to PGCE students, presenting at conferences, and interviewing prospective postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) candidates. There are also plans to support the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program at Anglia Ruskin University and provide SEND training to initial teacher training students undergoing the Norfolk, Essex, and Suffolk initial teacher training programs, along with being a host school for students. The school believes it is important to contribute to these organisations and is keen to be involved in such projects, believing that they gain a great deal by 'being at the forefront of the latest research, which they can then use in their school for the benefit of pupils.

The school has formed a successful working partnership with another primary SEND hub, and pupils from both schools have been able to collaborate on joint visits, and the teaching staff have been able to exchange ideas. Six pupils with hearing impairments attend the school, higher than the national average. The school recognised that, in most other schools, children with hearing impairments were often the only ones, and so Exning Primary hosts events, facilitated by Suffolk services, where children from across the area, from different schools, can meet.



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The school's work with the community has reaped financial rewards, used to expand pupils' provision. Their efforts have secured significant grants from supermarkets, legacy Trusts, and local charities that have enabled them to fund projects such as developing the forest school area, sensory facilities, total communications boards, and play equipment. Additionally, as participants in the British Racing School education program, pupils receive annual, free visits to a local stud, the racing museum, and a race day experience, where they learn about all the careers, aside from being jockeys, that are available in the industry.

The school has created many pupil Leadership opportunities, with such wide-ranging roles as librarians and school councillors. During this assessment, Year 2 Meet and Greet monitors approached the assessor and confidently explained the lesson currently underway and a tour of the classroom. Their pride was evident. Alongside subject exercise books, each student is also proud of their work journals, which contain a chronological collection of their best work or most significant learning, titled 'Collected Best Works of...'. During a tour of the school, Year 6 students were seen preparing an assembly that reflected on their time at Exning Primary School, offering advice to each year group with anecdotes about their personal experiences, relishing the opportunity to joyfully reflect on their time in the school.

Pupils achieve well at Exning Primary School. The quality of pupil discussion and the excellent speaking and listening skills observed were particularly noteworthy. During this assessment, pupils were welcoming, polite, curious, absorbed in whatever they were doing, and keen to share information and demonstrate their joyfulness as they shared their thoughts with the assessor.

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 Centre of Excellence. I therefore recommend that the school retains its Centre of Excellence 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 Centre of Excellence status.

Assessor: Ms Hazel J Simmons

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd