



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School St Mary's RC Primary School
Clare Road
Levenshulme
Manchester
M19 2QW

Head/Principal Joanne O'Mullane
Tracey Collins

IQM Lead Ms Joanne O'Mullane

Date of Review 11th November 2025

Assessor Ms Lydia Gibbons

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group Northwessians

Ambassador Mr Matthew Cuss
Ms Siona Robson

Next Meeting 4th February 2026

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Summer 2024	4 th July 2024	No
Autumn 2024	13 th November 2024	Yes
Spring 2025	6 th June 2025	No
Summer 2025	23 rd June 2025	Yes
Autumn 2025	21 st October 2025	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Staff enjoyed the visit to Irk Valley Community School and took away ideas from the Nursery provision. During this cluster group visit, staff found it interesting to reflect on supporting families who are new to the country and draw on ideas from how to support pupils and parents who are new to the community by the ideas shared from the School of Sanctuary.

The Everton IQM training was inspiring in terms of how to drive improvement based on books as staff training, thinking outside of the box, empowering young girls and educating them around menstruation. The SENCo has looked for local super around



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interventions empowering young girls but did not find anything available. Staff in school are exploring setting up their own version of this support as they could name particular children who would really benefit from it.

At Delamere staff were inspired by how children are engaged in the local community. Staff are looking at how to engage pupils in real life learning in the local community e.g. serving in the local café. Staff are continuing to think of ways to engage parents of pupils with additional needs. They have planned a chit, chat and coffee morning.

Evidence

- Inclusive resources
- Photobooks celebrating; special events, forest school learning and their TV appearances on a show called Time for School
- Books the school are using to inform policy changes
- Inclusive books about dyslexia and dyspraxia books featuring children from the school
- Nurturing November ELSA support leaflet for parents/carers
- Bloom and Grow record
- EBSA case study
- Adapting teaching/provision to support inclusion powerpoint
- School Development Plan
- Attendance Policy
- After school activities overview
- National School Attendance Award
- Action plan for supporting school attendance

Additional Activities

- Tour of the school
- Meetings with staff, pupils and parent
- Meeting with the leadership team



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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

Project 1: To develop and implement a whole-school strategic approach to supporting children with Emotional-Based School Avoidance and to further enhance attendance systems for all students.

As part of its commitment to inclusive practice, St Mary's RC Primary School has placed a strong emphasis on supporting pupils experiencing Emotional-Based School Avoidance (EBSA), recognising it as a growing area of need within the current cohort. The school's approach is deeply rooted in relational inclusion, personalised support, and early intervention.

In the classroom, staff have taken thoughtful steps to create environments that foster emotional safety and connection. A Year 4 teacher spoke passionately about the importance of cultivating a calm atmosphere, using lighting and layout to reduce anxiety and promote comfort. His classroom is carefully arranged to meet individual needs: some pupils sit in groups to encourage discussion, while others are paired with trusted talk partners at smaller tables. Central to his practice is the belief that children need to feel seen and understood. This is reflected in the class motto, "Work hard, be kind," which underpins a culture of respect and empathy.

Building positive relationships is a cornerstone of the school's EBSA strategy. Staff prioritise strong interpersonal connections between adults and pupils, as well as among peers. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely with parents to understand the underlying causes of school-related anxiety, maintaining open lines of communication and conducting regular home visits. The school is mindful of the language used when discussing EBSA, ensuring it is respectful, non-stigmatising, and focused on strengths.

Personalised planning and adaptive teaching strategies are key to supporting pupils with EBSA. Children may follow bespoke transition plans that include arriving through alternative entrances, staggered start times, or attending nurture breakfasts with familiar adults. Within lessons, staff use tools such as reading pens and chunked texts to support access to learning. Teaching assistants provide brain breaks and sensory regulation activities, helping pupils manage emotional responses and remain engaged.

Collaboration with the SENCo, pastoral lead, and external professionals—including hospital schools—enhances the school's capacity to respond to complex needs. Staff shared a successful case study of a pupil who had previously struggled with severe anxiety around school attendance. Through consistent relationships, soft starts, choice-based routines, and a predictable structure, the pupil now attends regularly and engages positively with learning. The school's approach centres on building trust, celebrating strengths, and maintaining consistency. One teaching assistant described her work with a young boy experiencing EBSA, demonstrating deep empathy and skill in supporting his emotional regulation. Her relational approach, grounded in patience and understanding, exemplifies the school's ethos of inclusive, child-centred support.

Staff have received targeted training to support pupils with EBSA and to develop awareness of those at risk. A strategic plan is in place to guide interventions for EBSA pupils and their families. Case studies highlight improved attendance following the



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implementation of multiple strategies, demonstrating the impact of a consistent, relational approach.

The school has introduced a comprehensive personal development plan to enrich the curriculum and foster pupil engagement. As part of this initiative, pupils now complete their own Bloom and Grow Passport, encouraging reflection and personal growth. Pupil leadership groups have also been established, with EBSA pupils actively involved to strengthen their sense of belonging, purpose, and contribution to school life. Attendance is monitored closely, and attendance awards have been introduced to celebrate progress. Children particularly enjoyed discussing the Mr Potato Head award, which has become a popular motivator. Data indicates that attendance has improved overall for vulnerable groups, reflecting the success of these strategies.

St Mary's RC Primary School remains committed to early identification and proactive support for EBSA, ensuring that every child feels safe, valued, and able to thrive within the school community.

When speaking to a parent, she shared how the school supported her child through play therapy, the Rainbow Grief Support Program, the educational psychologist, and regular home-school communication. The parent said the message from staff that "we work together" became stronger over time as their actions matched this approach—they worked collaboratively with the family to support the pupil's needs, and her attendance is now hugely improved. The parent shared how school staff show they care about her child and want what is best for her. They held regular meetings with the family, which were focused, and follow-up actions were always carried out quickly. The parent was grateful for all the work staff have done to help her child thrive.

When speaking to a Year 4 class teacher, he was clearly passionate and highly skilled in supporting pupils with their mental health and wellbeing. His classroom was carefully planned, with calming lighting and soft music playing. A pupil said, "Mr Pendleberry has helped me believe in myself," showing the impact of his support on individual self-belief.

Project 2: To develop a cycle of Inclusion information sharing for parents through regular workshops across the academic year.

Building strong partnerships with parents is a cornerstone of inclusive practice at St Mary's RC Primary School. The school's commitment to meaningful parental involvement has been formally recognised through the achievement of the Gold Award for Leading Parent Partnership. A teacher who leads on this work spoke with pride about how parental engagement is embedded in the culture of the school, describing it as "at the heart of everything we do."

Community involvement is evident across the school's calendar and physical environment. Family allotments have been developed in the outdoor area, providing opportunities for shared learning and wellbeing. A parent now regularly supports forest school sessions, enriching outdoor learning experiences. The school hosts a range of community events, including the Summer Festival and the Lantern Parade, which bring families together and celebrate the school's inclusive ethos.



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Structured engagement is facilitated through half-termly parent forums, led by the parent partnership teacher and the pastoral manager. These forums follow a clear agenda and provide a platform for parent voice to influence school decision-making. A recent example focused on food in school, where feedback from both parents and pupils led to changes in the school dinner menu, with a renewed emphasis on healthy eating. The school is now working in partnership with ProVeg to promote sustainability and nutritional awareness.

Parent forums have also driven practical changes in school policy and provision. Concerns raised about the volume of home learning led to a streamlined and simplified approach, making it more manageable for families. Similarly, feedback around children missing playtime prompted a review of the school's behaviour and relational policy. These examples highlight the school's responsiveness and commitment to co-production with families.

The school actively encourages parents to contribute to projects and initiatives. Following discussions at the parent forum, several parents volunteered to support school-based activities, including the allotment project. The school is funding DBS checks to enable these parents to take on leadership roles within the initiative. Plans are also underway to establish a "Parent Climate Crew" to support the school's sustainability work.

Communication with parents is clear and consistent, facilitated through multiple channels including social media, the school website, and weekly digital newsletters. Parents are invited into school regularly for celebration of learning events, where they engage in classroom activities alongside their children and share in their achievements.

For parents of pupils with additional needs, the school has created targeted opportunities for support and connection. Local services are invited to set up stalls during school events, enabling families to access resources and advice. Coffee mornings are held specifically for parents of children with SEND, providing a space for networking and mutual support.

Parents also play an active role in cultural and thematic events. During Africa Day, African parents contributed by sharing stories, demonstrating traditional hair braiding, preparing food, enriching the curriculum and fostering cultural pride. Parents were also present at the recent Remembrance Day assembly, reflecting their ongoing involvement in the life of the school.

To ensure accessibility and openness, parents are encouraged to share suggestions via the school's suggestion box or by email. This inclusive approach to partnership ensures that all voices are heard and valued, and that the school continues to evolve in response to the needs of its community.



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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

Project 1

The school will continue to focus on supporting children with Emotional-Based School Avoidance. The aim is to further develop and implement a whole-school approach to supporting children with EBSA and to enhance attendance systems for all pupils.

The school plans to build on its work in this area with a focus on early identification of children at risk and timely intervention. Leaders want to embed the systems and strategies already developed to ensure sustained improvements in attendance over time.

Project 2

Develop a whole-school approach to Relational Inclusion with a focus on Restorative Approaches.

St Mary's prides itself on its nurturing ethos and its deep understanding of how adverse childhood experiences can impact pupils. The school works tirelessly to support its most vulnerable learners in a variety of ways, with a strong commitment to truly understanding each individual child. Leaders aim to create a whole-school environment where children experience consistent, positive interactions with adults that promote emotional regulation and inclusion.

This vision extends beyond classroom practice into policy development, with plans to review the current traffic light system and introduce an approach that incorporates restorative practices and reflection. To embed this ethos across the school, relational inclusion training will be delivered by Ambition Trust CEO Antony Benedict under the theme 'Educating Everyone: Relational Inclusion,' ensuring that staff have the knowledge and confidence to sustain a culture of empathy, respect, and belonging.



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Overview

St Mary's RC Primary School demonstrates a deeply embedded commitment to inclusive practice, and staff continue to adapt to and understand its evolving community. Recent changes in local housing have led to a shift in the school's demographic profile, and the school has embraced this with a renewed focus on parent voice, engagement, and sustainability. There has been a culture shift in school, recognising that it is everyone's role to support inclusion within their own subject and focus areas as leaders. This has further strengthened inclusion and provision across all subjects in school.

The school has also achieved the Leading Parent Partnership Gold Award, reflecting its strong and sustained commitment to working collaboratively with families. Half-termly parent forums, led by the parent partnership teacher and pastoral manager, provide a structured platform for parent voice. These forums have led to tangible changes, such as adjustments to the school dinner menu following a discussion on healthy eating, and a review of the behaviour policy in response to parental views. Parents are actively involved in school life through events like the Summer Festival, Lantern Parade, and Africa Day, and are supported through targeted coffee mornings, SEND information stalls, and celebration assemblies.

Improving attendance is a key priority for the school, and this is approached in a creative and child-centred way. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about each class's attendance mascot, Mr Potato Head, and the excitement of earning parts for him as a class reward. The class with the highest attendance is celebrated weekly, often choosing a trip to the local park. A parent shared how she motivated her daughter to get up in the morning by reminding her about earning a new piece for Mr Potato Head.

The school's ethos is grounded in a growth mindset philosophy, which is celebrated through vibrant displays and embedded in classroom practice. Pupils are encouraged to take ownership of their learning, using traffic light cups to self-assess their understanding and seek support when needed. This promotes a culture of openness, reflection, and resilience. A research-informed approach underpins the school's curriculum development, with a current focus on oracy and inclusion. Pupils are given weekly discussion questions to explore at home, strengthening both communication skills and home-school links.

St Mary's makes excellent use of its outdoor facilities, which include a recently developed scooter park. Staff carefully map provision across the site to ensure that outdoor spaces are used effectively to support regulation and wellbeing. The forest school approach is part of the school's core offer and is enjoyed by everyone. The school continues to further develop the outside areas as a core part of its provision.

The Zones of Regulation framework is used consistently across the school to help pupils identify and express their emotions. Regulation stations are visible in classrooms, and resources such as ear defenders are readily accessible to all pupils. Zones of Regulation displays can be seen across the school.

Music is a particular strength of the school and is delivered in an inclusive and engaging way. During the visit, Year 6 pupils were rehearsing with tin whistles, and staff shared



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how drumming had been an effective regulation strategy for a pupil with ADHD. Pupils share and celebrate their music learning as part of assemblies, performances, and the Summer Festival. These creative approaches to inclusion reflect the school's commitment to meeting the diverse needs of its learners.

Staff across the school deliver a range of targeted interventions to support pupils who need additional help. Interventions observed included Number Stacks and Toe by Toe, both of which were delivered in areas just outside the classroom. Resources are used effectively to promote access and independence. Pupils have access to personal tools such as reading pens, and the library includes a dedicated basket of Barrington Stoke books to support learners with dyslexia in finding accessible and engaging reading material.

Both pupils and staff spoken to at the school were proud and invested in the school. A pupil who has previously struggled with school attendance said the school is "good, great, amazing and we are loved." Pupils were complimentary of staff, the school, and particularly the special events such as the visiting workshops they get to take part in, cinema night, the Lantern Parade, and the annual pantomime. When asked what they like best about their school, children said "all the nice teachers," "everyone's really understanding," "there are lots of people to talk to," and one pupil shared how he enjoys Art. Children were able to say how parents are involved in school and that many of their parents had been in school for their Remembrance Day assembly. When it was explained to the children what parent forums were and how their parents are welcome to school to share ideas about how school can improve or change certain things over time, the youngest child said, "school is perfect the way it is."

The school's inclusive ethos is evident in every aspect of its provision—from the thoughtful use of space and resources to the strength of its relationships with pupils and families. Through a combination of high expectations, creativity, and compassion, St Mary's RC Primary School continues to provide a nurturing and aspirational environment where all children are supported to thrive.

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 Lydia Gibbons

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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