



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



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| <b>School:</b>         | Riverside Primary School<br>St Edmunds Way<br>Rainham<br>Kent<br>ME8 8ET             |
| <b>Head/Principal</b>  | Primary Executive Head Teacher - Mrs Kim Wilmer<br>Head of School - Mrs Helen Robson |
| <b>IQM Lead:</b>       | Mrs Zoe Huggett  |
| <b>Date of Review:</b> | 29/06/2022   |
| <b>Assessor</b>        | Louise Simpson   |

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

Cluster Group: South East

Ambassador: Kenny Frederick

Date of Next Meeting: TBC

Next Cluster Group Meeting Focus: TBC – at Riverside Primary School

### **Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day:**

- Meetings with:
  - SLT
  - Pupils
  - Parents
  - Teaching Assistants
  - Teachers
- School website.
- Ofsted Report for school context.
- Review of Targets and Flagship Action Plan.

### **Additional Activities:**

- Learning walk of the school with the IQM Lead.



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### Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

This review is the final one for the current 3-year Flagship Project which focused on the mental health and well-being of the whole school community. Focus groups were convened to discuss the outcomes and impact of the targets agreed for 2021-2022 which were as follows:

- Adapt the Curriculum to ensure well-being is a key priority across the school.
- To increase staff skills and knowledge, so there is greater capacity for supporting well-being.
- Ensure that there is a range of appropriate resources for supporting families with well-being needs.
- Promote and support staff well-being.

The meetings planned, along with the learning walk, were used to collate further evidence to that provided by the school in their Flagship Action Plan which already comprehensively demonstrated how the targets had been achieved. Notable features included the impact of the MHST practitioner along with the successful outcomes from the CBT sessions. The impact of the counsellor has resulted in reduced demand for drop-ins, and a reduction in children who self-report as feeling anxious or having low mood. The success of the art therapy sessions for those with SEMH/anxiety needs has been built on to include a whole school art project which has been inclusive in its design. Training has been impactful and embedded in practice with further developments planned. Access to opportunities since lockdown have been extensive and varied and appreciated by all especially in terms of accessibility.

The SLT discussion included additional context on the continued developments for each of the eight elements and the proposed action planning for the new Flagship round beginning in 2022-23.

The parent/carer group was unequivocally positive about the inclusive culture of the school which was described as a “calm, warm place” with many parents travelling to access the school due to this reputation and in some cases being recommended Riverside by other schools who perceived they themselves could not meet needs. They talked about the “sense of community” and the “can do” attitude without the sense of resentment some had experienced elsewhere.

Parents confirmed the success of parental support such as Time to Talk Sessions run by the Home School Support Worker who was able to signpost to other services where appropriate. A particular sustained success was where this forum happened to introduce two isolated parents with shared issues to one another. They have now formed a supportive friendship that has continued independently reducing their isolation and providing mutual practical and moral support.

The new MHST practitioner has helped many parents and pupils. One parent reported she had lost confidence in finding a solution for her child but had seen amazing progress



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following the strategies advocated, supported by regular communication, resulting in a return to positive family experiences. The sensitivity and persistence of the school with complex issues was also discussed with long term support from a range of staff having a massive impact. In particular one child's needs were managed over a long period of time. The need was noticeable to others, so staff explained in an appropriate way to other pupils so to avoid stigmatisation and enable progress. (I also observed this acceptance of the need for personalisation many times on my tour of the school.) A number of specific therapies and interventions were mentioned demonstrating a good understanding of the holistic offer available to pupils and families.

The group stated that what makes this school special is that "if you have an issue the school is always there to help you in a non-judgemental way." They mentioned the true inclusion of children with differing needs as a positive which means that "when our children go out, they don't judge others". They praised the way that values run through the school and gave an example of 4-year-olds using the term 'resilience' in the correct context. One parent mentioned that a "Riverside Attitude Award" was something celebrated at home more than any other achievement.

The group commented that the success of inclusion in the school was down to the Leadership Team who drive the ethos consistently through the school with key features such as common language being used by all parents at home too. They described the school as "always wanting to do the best" and looking for ways to do it even better with "home and school working together" and setting up new interventions when they see a need. The online Dojo system was universally praised as revolutionising communication as it was informative and responsive. They also commented that the culture of participation being a focus in extracurricular sporting and other activities rather than winning as being of long-term benefit. A final testament was in relation to the parental survey where the only criticism was that they could not think of ideas to improve the offer!

Pupils confirmed the support available to individual students as well as families - "she supports not just me but my mum too". All recognised the impact of support they had and said that there were probably other people who could be helped if there were even more staff. They described a range of interventions and whole class support to help well-being stating that they knew where to go if they had any worries, needed to calm down, or needed specific resources to help them at particular times i.e. to calm down.

They talked about support for transition and how this had alleviated anxieties. They cited examples of support for physical health as well as mental health including the Daily Mile to "use energy to be more focused", the outdoor library, the sensory areas, the Biodome, and Riverside Rangers. They also discussed in class activities including the "compliment sheet" kept in the classroom produced during curriculum time. One pupil stated that after a difficult time outside, looking at the compliment box produced by peers to see what they liked about him made him "feel amazing".

Teachers gave numerous examples of how aspects of diversity and inclusion are integral to all areas of the whole curriculum. Introduction of yoga, mindfulness, art projects and a recent whole school eco art project all support inclusion and well-being with these being accessible to children with a range of additional needs.



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Training was spoken of positively. The input regarding Trauma Informed Practice was particularly highlighted by all staff as something that impacted on a number of different practices. Staff feel listened to in terms of training needs and are given opportunities to develop and share practices. They utilise e-learning independently to pursue interest areas which are then shared with colleagues. They feel well-being is fully supported in a range of ways, formally and informally with a commitment from the Leadership Team. They make use of compliment slips and Feelgood Folders and actively participate and contribute as they see the value. Collaboration and peer to peer support is standard practice.

Teaching Assistants echoed the well-being sentiments and, as a staff group, felt well supported as well as being very clear on how their role was key to pupil and family well-being. They offer daily check-in opportunities for students and parents and are key in making learning accessible to progress and fostering an awareness of how to support difference and how to respond to non-familiar behaviours so that “nobody is left without a friend or a buddy” and “children are not demonised because of their behaviours.”

The team ethos of the TA group is evident with many examples of how mutual support is key to their success and well-being. The supportive culture means that there is a situation where “everybody likes everybody”!

The staff feel supported with training and development of skills. Performance management focuses on individual needs with management very responsive to these. Comments were made including “I feel listened to”, “my career path is being looked after” and opportunities were provided when staff wanted to develop or use specific expertise. There is a lot of informal peer to peer support developing the staff expertise incrementally as well as planned sessions.

There is comprehensive evidence to support the self-evaluation of the 2021-22 Flagship targets with many additional activities being in place to develop the inclusive offer further. There is clear reflective practice and, despite leadership changes, stability has been maintained which has not halted developments. The high expectations are evident in every aspect of the school and inclusion is a key element with 1 CPD day focused on this annually. The Trust is committed to this being maintained and staff are supported to deliver the vision. Whilst individual needs have a very personalised approach, the overwhelming culture is of integration and inclusion with fluid and dynamic organisation.

Whilst focusing on the targets, the eight elements continue to be enhanced. Curriculum development has included a new focus on life skills linking the Biodome vegetable growing with class cooking using the produce. There are a number of environmental changes to the school being made to enhance learning and well-being which are well thought out and supported financially by the PTA in part. A new immersive sensory room and attached sensory garden are being developed which will provide opportunities for individuals and classes to have relaxation and mindfulness sessions.



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Target monitoring and evaluation sheets are being reviewed to include measures for softer targets for emotional well-being. Behaviour has been recognised as a strength which is going to be utilised further to support other Trust schools. The community projects are being developed and there is ongoing work reviewing interventions for impact.

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

**Project Title: Developing Riverside's wider inclusion offer.**

#### Objectives:

- To develop an inclusion outreach and support offer to local schools to strengthen the inclusive reputation of Riverside and reinforce good practice.
- To positively contribute to and influence the development of the ongoing SEND and Inclusion Strategy in Medway.
- To develop a Trust Behaviour Hub.
- To have the Inclusion Lead trained as an IQM Assessor to look at practice beyond the current context.

#### Actions will include but are not limited to:

- Facilitating visits from other schools for SENCOs, class teachers and TAs to demonstrate best practice in supporting children with high needs in a mainstream environment.
- Attending the Zone School SENCO meetings to share expertise in ways to support high needs individuals or different types of needs in the mainstream.
- Signing up to the Zone School Support Group to offer advice on ways to manage significantly challenging behaviour including those at risk of exclusion.
- Sharing expertise across the Trust to ensure consistency with regard to practice, record keeping, referrals and EHCP applications.
- Participating in the local SEND panel meetings where EHCP decision making takes place to inform own practice and processes and to support other schools.
- Participating in 'task and finish' groups convened by the local authority to shape outreach and crisis support offers to schools, communicating developments with Trust schools and offering to pilot new initiatives.
- Potentially offering Riverside outreach support, utilising the strength of supporting SEND in the mainstream environment and additional expertise linked to the ASD and VI provisions



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- Building an expert working party across the Trust with termly behaviour walks and developmental feedback to inform further support and training to support different behavioural needs.
- Accessing training as an IQM Assessor to bring in ideas of good inclusive practice from a broader context to enhance the Trust.

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

These have been well attended with each session resulting in follow up action in the school. The school has welcomed the chance to see other resourced provision outside of the area. Colleagues within the cluster have remained in contact and the IQM Lead commented that she “always comes back buzzing.”

The next meeting will be held at this school in October/November 2022



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### Overview

The commitment to inclusion in this school is evident from the moment you make contact in the way that office staff interact with parents and other visitors and the wealth of supportive information made available. This warm and welcoming port of call sets the tone for the rest of the school.

There have been some leadership changes with the Head Teacher now being an Executive Head Teacher over two trust schools. This transition has been planned thoughtfully and carefully with no evidence of negative impact and it is clear that the new partnership will be positive for both schools. The school is expanding due to its success and this is being managed well. The Executive Head Teacher commented that the CEO of the Trust are fully behind continuing the inclusion journey.

The values and ethos of this school are consistently evident visually, through interaction around the school, and from speaking to staff and parents. This is a school that knows its community, is known for its practice beyond the immediate area attracting families from greater distances and without a shadow of doubt warm, welcoming and aspirational. It is also a school that has high expectations for all and this is not compromised so that academic aspirations go hand in hand with excellent care. There are positive relationships with commissioned services and other providers to maximise the impact of support.

The values of this school and practices that demonstrate this are consistently applied throughout the school and are visible no matter what you look at or who you ask like lettering in a stick of rock. They look at the needs of children, families and staff holistically and creatively. The work on the school environment is outstanding. Each outdoor facility for example has been thought about carefully to maximise opportunities and participation for all pupils. Watching lunch break was an absolute joy.

The VI and ASD specialist provisions work in harmony with the mainstream classes maximising opportunities for meaningful inclusion whilst ensuring that specific needs are met effectively. The commitment to these students is always under review. Learning environments are flexible and dynamic minimising any risk of isolation for pupils and fostering a healthy attitude to change and difference. There are examples of interventions for individual pupils and specific needs which have been mainstreamed for all children both to benefit all and to minimise any feeling of stigmatisation for particular pupils. Space in the school is used creatively and with clear outcomes in mind and with an excellent balance with the use of indoor and outdoor learning and social opportunities. There has been a huge commitment to improving these spaces which has been realised. Parents and the site supervisor and team and have all been integral to this whole school improvement.

The team in this school are led incredibly effectively with compassion and constructive challenge and truly work collaboratively. continually adding strength to an already strong team. The leadership are reflective and forward thinking and already have plans to reintroduce opportunities to be more outward looking both for their own practice and for supporting others. Visiting outstanding schools for training days is one such practice about to be re-introduced which I am sure will support the school in their



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aspirations to build on their existing outstanding elements achieved in the 2019 assessment. The next Flagship targets reflect this aspiration also.

This school was a joy to visit. I am confident that things will not stand still and there will be more exciting things to experience at the next visit. The aspiration to support other schools and the Local Authority to improve the local offer generally should be commended.

The next review will look closely at how the school has interacted with its Inclusion cluster. Evidence of cluster working will underpin the capacity for the school to maintain its Flagship School status.

**Assessor: Louise Simpson**

**Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:**

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