



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School Riverside Primary School and Nursery
St Edmund's Way
Rainham
Kent
ME8 8ET

Head/Principal Mrs Helen Robson

IQM Lead Mrs Zoe Huggett

Date of Review 26th June 2025

Assessor Ms Emma Longley

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group 24 Carat

Ambassador Dr Kenny Frederick

Next Meeting

Meeting Focus

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2023	15 th November 2023	Yes
Spring 2024	12 th March 2024	Yes
Summer 2024	26 th June 2024	Yes
Autumn 2024	14 th October 2024	Yes
Spring 2025	13 th March 2025	Yes
Summer 2025	5 th June 2025	Yes



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The Impact of the Cluster Group

Leaders at Riverside School are fully committed to inclusive practice through active involvement with the IQM cluster group network. This collaborative partnership helps share knowledge, letting the school learn best practices from other schools while sharing its own expertise to support professional development across the cluster.

The school has taken part in cluster meetings hosted by Academy of Cuxton Schools and Kingsnorth, focusing on evidence-based interventions like care packages, digital floor books, nurture approaches, sensory circuits, mental health support frameworks, and OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) implementation. These professional development opportunities have directly shaped the school's approach to intervention design, curriculum enhancement within the life skills programme, and OPAL development which has enhanced the outdoor learning environments that balance appropriate safety with developmental challenge, encouraging creativity, collaboration, and active engagement among pupils. This has led to improvements in pupil opportunities, resources, and the physical environment.

Riverside's inclusive provision serves as a model for other schools, with peer leaders visiting to see the OPAL lunchtime implementation and The Nest provision. The inclusion manager also contributes to sector-wide professional development by facilitating the NPQSENCo programme in the local area, showing the school's commitment to advancing inclusive practice beyond its immediate community. The inclusion manager's professional expertise is a real asset to the cluster network, especially given the current educational situation with increasing SEND populations, funding constraints, EHCP processing delays, and limited access to specialist support services. This expertise helps with collaborative problem-solving and developing adaptive practice across participating schools.

Evidence

Meeting with senior leaders, governor, learning walk, class assembly, observation of OPAL play in action, observation of a class assembly, meeting with parents at 'time to talk' session led by home school support worker.



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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The Inclusion Manager is an influential and inspirational leader, chairing the Medway Zones 1 and 2 SENCO network and running termly professional development sessions that help local practitioners share evidence-based practice. The school's involvement with the PINS project has improved how they evaluate support for neurodiverse pupils and given them access to specialist training, including Signalong methodology. They are currently working with Educational Psychology Services to develop transition procedures that might be rolled out across the whole Local Authority.

Through partnership with the Thames Gateway Teaching School Hub, the Inclusion Manager delivers the NPQSENCO programme across multiple groups while developing extra continuous professional development opportunities. Working with other schools in the Trust includes peer SEND reviews and training, such as Executive Functioning sessions and curriculum enhancement workshops, encouraging research-informed practice and improving pupil outcomes through sharing knowledge strategically.

Leadership capacity has grown through appointing an Assistant SENCo (who also now attends the cluster meetings), who will take over leading The Nest provision from September. This shows good succession planning and expertise development within the inclusion team.

Setting up "The Nest" represents a big step forward in the school's ability to support pupils with complex developmental needs. This specialist provision delivers targeted intervention for Reception and Year 1 pupils experiencing developmental delay, using multi-sensory, play-based learning approaches both indoors and outdoors. The provision offers a personalised curriculum framework that focuses on early years developmental principles, incorporating pupils' individual interests and experiences through an accessible, calm environment and curriculum supported by well-informed staff with specialist expertise in areas like nurture principles, ELSA methodology, and speech and language development. The provision stays flexible to support mainstream integration opportunities, letting pupils access age-related learning experiences within the broader school setting when appropriate utilising specialist intervention where needed whilst also facilitating wider inclusive practice.

Staff regularly review children's engagement and progress in the Nest. One-page profiles make sure everyone is clear about individual learning objectives and developmental targets, while evidence collection through photos, observational records, and recorded work in books (where developmentally appropriate) shows measurable pupil progress.



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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

The school's new three-year Flagship project focuses on "Developing the environment within the school building and grounds to further support pupils' learning and play/social skills." This is designed to make the school environment even better so all children, especially those with SEND, get high quality opportunities for play, social development, and learning support.

Firstly, OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) has been a real success story this year, and the school are now working toward achieving Platinum status. This gives children structured opportunities to engage successfully with peers through meaningful activities and shows the school's commitment to evidence-based practice that supports individual pupils and enhances the whole school culture. Individual success stories show improvements in physical development, relationship building, communication, and social interaction skills which have inspired ongoing development of the provision. Planned Stay and Play opportunities will enable families to become involved and help parents understand the impact of play-based learning approaches.

The second priority is developing The Nest provision. This involves re-deploying the assistant SENCo, a qualified teacher, currently in Early Years, to lead provision for pupils with complex needs. This demonstrates a strong commitment to maintaining and embedding the personalised, nurture-focused approach that makes The Nest so effective. This will further strengthen accountability for Education, Health and Care Plan delivery, meeting statutory requirements through targeted intervention, tracking measurable outcomes and maintaining robust assessment that shows pupil progress. Staff will continue to engage in collaborative planning and adaptive teaching, working with mainstream class teachers to help bridge specialist and mainstream provision where possible. This will support pupils' development while maintaining appropriate challenge through access to age-related learning opportunities through integration into classes with their peers to access the wider curriculum where appropriate.

The third focus is creating engaging spaces for children who need extra support, each designed for specific learning needs. Environmental improvements will include comprehensive outdoor learning spaces that complement indoor provision, creating varied sensory experiences and opportunities for physical development as well as enhancing corridor murals. Sensory space development will provide targeted environments for regulation support, attention development, and therapeutic intervention, letting pupils access learning in the best conditions for their individual needs. These enhancements will support the multi-sensory, play-based learning approach that is already having such a positive impact.

The Sunshine Room is being set up for one-to-one support, giving children who need intensive help a safe space to explore their interests while working toward joining their peers when they are ready. Currently this is being utilised by a Year 4 pupil with an EHCP, with a dedicated Teaching Assistant who really understands their complex needs. They are also converting a storage area into a meeting space for small groups and targeted academic support, making the most of every bit of space they have to meet increasing intervention demands.



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Overview

Leaders and staff at Riverside Primary put children at the heart of everything they do, creating a family atmosphere and culture where every single person makes a positive contribution and feels a sense of belonging and pride in what they offer children. The school has a calm, positive feel with plenty of celebration and genuine happiness throughout. "Everyone is welcome" at Riverside and what stands out is how staff genuinely understand that every child is unique and see these differences as strengths rather than challenges.

The team works together brilliantly, sharing expertise and supporting each other to make sure all pupils, including those with the most complex needs, get the right support. The Inclusion Manager is seen as a true "advocate for children," making sure pupil needs drive all decisions. The leadership team promote shared responsibility, and there is a sense that "we are in this together and the team gets us through." This is particularly important given the significant numbers of pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and 8% of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans, with more currently being assessed. The Academy Committee governance body maintain good oversight of operations and strategy through regular meetings and focused monitoring visits. They ask challenging questions while maintaining supportive relationships with school leaders.

Leaders actively seek to recruit and retain staff who have both the skills and the right mindset for facilitating genuine and authentic inclusive education. Subsequently there is significant investment in developing staff, which helps maintain consistency and builds real expertise. This includes inclusion-focused training days and regular staff meetings covering topics like executive functioning, Emotionally Based School Avoidance, and how to utilise toolkits and resources that support adaptive teaching. Staff are committed to continuous learning, creating a strong team culture that values sharing expertise. The school actively participates in the PINS project and works with Educational Psychology Services on transition procedures that may influence Local Authority practice. Strategic links with local schools and external agencies create a comprehensive support network, demonstrating commitment to collaborative practice that puts pupil outcomes first through shared expertise and coordinated support. The Inclusion Manager's extensive knowledge is drawn upon whenever new challenges arise, ensuring training stays relevant and practical. Her expertise means additional needs are spotted early and the right support is put in place quickly. This expertise extends beyond the school where the Inclusion Manager chairs the Medway Zones 1 and 2 SENCo group and facilitates SENCo NPQ training.

The curriculum enables children to develop a range of skills and knowledge, for example Year six were observed engaging in life skills workshop about first aid and using the designated kitchen to cook. Children were consistently engaged in lessons throughout the school showing curiosity, independence and drawing on their experiences outside of school to apply knowledge. Learning spaces are thoughtfully designed to remove barriers and help all children access learning. The curriculum, activities and environment are designed to address the developmental needs of individual children with resources carefully chosen and staff deployed strategically, demonstrating exceptional skill in adapting their approaches to meet different learning needs. Several targeted intervention spaces have been created including the Sunshine



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Room for one-to-one support, the Starlight Room has an immersive sensory space, the Wellbeing Room for counselling and speech therapy, and converted storage areas for small group interventions. Teaching Assistants are deployed based on what children need, with a clear focus on building independence over time. This long-term thinking helps children develop their own learning skills rather than becoming dependent on adult support.

The Nest provision supports pupils with complex needs through personalised learning that reflects their interests at an appropriate stage of development. Children were seen engaging in purposeful learning, helped by kind, knowledgeable staff who know exactly how to challenge and support each child. This will be led by a qualified teacher from September, to enhance the expertise already deployed in this provision. Assessment practices in Nest draw on Department for Education (DFE) Early Years guidance to track progress and plan learning, ensuring they meet statutory requirements whilst developmentally appropriate. One-page profiles displayed on the wall clearly show what each child needs, including what makes them happy, how they communicate, how they play, signs of distress, and what adult support helps them succeed. Progress is captured in the moment using iPads, celebrating small yet significant achievements. The school uses Tapestry and ClassDojo to share progress with families, creating multiple ways to celebrate children's steps forward together.

OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) has been one of the school's biggest successes this year, particularly at lunchtimes. Staff have noticed huge improvements in children's creativity, independence, and problem-solving skills. It has become a real cornerstone of what they offer and will continue to evolve as they work toward Platinum status. Children are really engaged when they are outside, using a wide range of different resources in various spaces around the school site. They have set up termly rotation of Play Ranger responsibilities, which gives pupils leadership opportunities and boosts their confidence while encouraging peer support and making sure everyone can join in. Regular assemblies introduce new activities and talk about the risks and benefits, which helps create a supportive culture that puts inclusive practice first. Staff training in OPAL principles makes sure everyone delivers it consistently and understands the developmental benefits. The impact is already clear with better pupil independence, more active engagement, creativity development, problem-solving skills, and physical development. Leaders from other local schools have visited to see how they have implemented it and learn from their approach.

This new approach aligns with the school's behaviour policy which prioritises holistic whole-child development, weaving together academic, social, emotional, and developmental growth. Looking at CPOMS data, there has been a drop in behavioural incidents due to the inclusive culture, environmental improvements, and staff consistently using inclusive approaches. Staff respond calmly to challenging situations using flexible strategies to maintain a well-regulated response. School values are talked about openly, with gentle, encouraging reminders about expectations rather than punitive approaches. Suspensions are very rare and always consider the complex circumstances behind children's behaviour, reflecting trauma-informed practice that prioritises understanding over punishment. Zones of Regulation are used consistently throughout school, giving children shared language and strategies for managing their emotions. Children learn to recognise their feelings and access the right support



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independently. Staff genuinely listen to children and respond to their needs, making sure their perspectives shape how support is planned.

Over forty parents attended the morning's Year 2 assembly, showing strong community investment. Families are genuinely supportive and trust school leaders. There is a growing role in response to new local housing developments which has influenced the demographic, although attendance remains above national averages and persistent absence below national statistics. Daily presence on the school gate from leaders creates natural opportunities for informal chats. "Feel Good Friday" music when children come into school is very popular and shows creative thinking about involving and engaging families, and parents expressed a real enjoyment of this. The Little Library near the entrance serves as a touching memorial to a former pupil while supporting community literacy and is well used by families.

There are smooth transitions for children and families both into and out of the school which accommodates progression from multiple nurseries into Reception and then from KS2 on into secondary. The inclusion manager maintains good working relationships with specialist settings to share expertise and support possible access into provision for children with complex needs.

The Riverside Rangers initiative develops children's understanding of civic responsibility through litter picks, bulb sharing, leaflet drops, supermarket bag packing, and Christmas singing at care homes. The school's Eco Committee promotes environmental awareness through poster campaigns and assemblies. Collaborative art projects with local artists create meaningful learning experiences that connect classroom work with real-world applications. Community celebrations like "Festival," summer fairs, and sports days position the school as a genuine community hub that brings diverse families together.

Riverside Primary is a true exemplar of inclusive education in practice, a place where every child and adult genuinely belong, differences are celebrated, and the whole community works together to help children thrive. It was an absolute pleasure to visit again and see the changes that have had such a positive impact on children and their learning.

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 Emma Longley

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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