



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School	Five Acre Wood School Boughton Lane Maidstone Kent ME15 9QF
Head/Principal	Mrs Peggy Murphy
IQM Lead	Ms Karen Robinson-Jones
Date of Review	27th November 2025
Assessor	Ms Melissa Hendry

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group	24 Carat
Ambassador	Dr Kenny Frederick
Next Meeting	12 th March 2026

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Spring 2025	13 th March 2025	Yes
Summer 2025	5 th June 2025	Yes
Autumn 2025	14 th October 2025	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Attendance at the IQM special school cluster meetings has had a notably positive impact on the school's practice. Participation in moderation with other specialist settings has been especially valuable, providing opportunities to benchmark approaches and ensure consistency in the quality of provision. Engaging in professional dialogue with colleagues from similar contexts has helped the school validate areas of strength while also identifying priorities for further development.

Five Acre Wood School has also benefited greatly from the networking opportunities offered through the cluster. These meetings have enabled staff to build strong professional relationships with others who share comparable challenges and ambitions, fostering a supportive and collaborative community. The exchange of ideas has been particularly influential in shaping the school's trauma-informed approach, with examples of effective practice from other settings directly informing future planning and next steps.



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



On one visit the school found it particularly useful to observe the use of the Zones of Regulation in a mainstream setting, including the online version of the programme. This has prompted the school to explore the potential benefits of purchasing digital access. They also noted a shared ethos regarding the value of enrichment and off-site visits. Following these discussions, the school contacted Inclusive Sport and has since commissioned them to provide mentoring for five students.

Evidence

- Broad range of supporting evidence provided prior to review day.
- Meeting with middle leaders
- Meeting with AHTs
- Meeting with family support team
- Meeting with curriculum lead
- Learning walks
- Meeting with support staff
- Meeting with learners
- Meeting with SLT

Additional Activities

- Lunch in the train café, served by students.
- Visits to 2 of the school sites



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

Project Title: Improve Reading, Writing and Oracy Outcomes within the Primary Formal and Secondary Satellite classes.

The current project at Five Acre Wood was initiated after leaders attended a presentation at the IQM conference, which acted as a catalyst for a comprehensive review of the school's reading provision. As part of this process, leaders have focused on shifting a culture in which expectations for pupils' reading achievement had been low.

To drive this improvement, the Simple View of Reading (SVR) has been adopted and rolled out across all Formal Learning Approach classes. Using this framework, staff are now able to build a clearer picture of individual pupils' reading profiles and pinpoint the specific areas where support is needed. The distinction the model makes between decoding (word recognition) and comprehension has helped teachers better identify the precise barriers learners face, enabling more targeted teaching.

Teachers are increasingly drawing on the SVR framework to guide planning within and beyond English lessons, shaping both classroom strategies and wider curriculum approaches. The model is also becoming a routine element of assessment discussions, helping to ensure greater consistency and clarity in planning for pupils' reading development.

Staff understanding of the SVR framework is steadily strengthening. Several members of the team have begun to act as 'champions,' demonstrating effective practice and providing support to colleagues as they embed the approach. Ongoing professional development will be essential to secure consistent interpretation and implementation of the SVR across all subjects and key stages.

The Intervention Team continues to play a central role in assessing pupils identified through class reviews and SVR analysis. Increasingly, intervention programmes are being tailored to reflect SVR findings, enabling targeted support for decoding, fluency, or comprehension as required. Early indications suggest that pupils make stronger progress when interventions are closely aligned with the specific reading component highlighted by the SVR assessment.

A comprehensive review of current evidence-based reading approaches has been undertaken, drawing on sources such as the Sutton Trust research on literacy interventions, Reciprocal Teaching methodologies, and the principles of both the Scarborough Reading Rope and the Simple View of Reading framework. In response to this evidence, a KS3 phonics programme has been introduced across Years 7, 8, and 9 to address gaps in decoding and fluency, ensuring that older learners have the opportunity to strengthen essential foundational reading skills.

Building on the positive impact of reading-for-pleasure initiatives in the primary phase, a dedicated secondary reading-for-pleasure period (Period 6) is being implemented for Years 7–9 to promote engagement, motivation, and vocabulary development. In addition, plans are in place to introduce Reciprocal Teaching later in the year, reflecting research that supports explicit comprehension strategy instruction. This approach will help



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



develop pupils' skills in inferencing, summarising, questioning, and clarifying. Alongside these literacy developments, the school's Oracy project, delivered in partnership with Camtree and Twinkl, is enhancing pupils' speaking and listening skills. The project provides structured opportunities for learners to articulate their thinking, discuss texts, and strengthen their communication competencies, and is currently being trialled within primary formal classes.

Early evaluation suggests that these combined initiatives are beginning to form a coherent, evidence-informed literacy strategy that promotes both skill development and wider engagement across the secondary phase.

Staff training in reading is structured around a clear CPD cycle of Introducing, Planning, Implementing, and Reflecting, which promotes a consistent and reflective approach to professional development across the academic year. Regular reading-focused input is integrated into Teacher Meetings and Morning Training, ensuring ongoing support and sustained development for all staff.

Training revisits core theoretical models such as the Simple View of Reading and the Scarborough Reading Rope, to reinforce staff understanding of the foundations of effective reading instruction. Sessions also cover practical classroom strategies, including approaches to reading during form time, techniques for developing vocabulary, and methods for embedding reading instruction across subject areas and year groups. Staff are supported in planning for reading within their own contexts and are encouraged to engage in reflective practice to identify strengths and next steps.

This structured model helps to ensure that all staff develop a secure understanding of literacy pedagogy and are equipped to deliver consistent, evidence-informed reading provision throughout the school. As the year progresses, it has become clear that revisiting this training remains essential, both to induct new staff and to ensure that key strategies are fully embedded and become part of everyday classroom practice.



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

Project Title: Embedding Trauma-Informed Practice Across the School

Outline of Project: This whole-school development initiative aims to embed trauma-informed and mentally healthy practices across every aspect of school life.

Following a recent review by the Leadership Team, it was agreed that the school's flagship project will move away from its previous literacy-focused initiative, which had concentrated on a specific aspect of school improvement. The new strategic direction will adopt a broader focus on embedding a fully trauma-informed approach across the school. While literacy development will remain an important area of work, it will progress as a separate improvement strand at a more measured pace. The revised flagship priority reflects the school's commitment to cultivating an environment that promotes emotional wellbeing, resilience, and supportive practice. This shift highlights the adaptive and forward-thinking leadership evident at Five Acre Wood School.

The project first took shape last year, when three staff members undertook specialist practitioner training in trauma-informed practice. Since qualifying, they have been working closely with selected pupils, using techniques that strengthen emotional regulation, wellbeing, and preparedness for learning. To build on this foundation, all staff participated in two training sessions which broadened whole school understanding of how trauma can influence behaviour, development, and learning. Over the summer, the Senior Leadership Team also completed advanced training tailored to leaders, enabling them to guide the initiative with a clear strategic vision.

As the work moves forward, the Senior Leadership Team, supported by a group of newly established 'trauma-informed champions,' will lead a detailed review of the school's current culture, policies, and staff development systems. This evaluation will help to pinpoint strengths already in place and determine where further progress is needed. Continuing professional development will place sustained focus on trauma, attachment, and emotional regulation to ensure that all staff share a consistent, well-informed approach to understanding and responding to the needs of pupils who have experienced adversity.

The school is committed to strengthening its trauma and mental health informed practice through a comprehensive programme of staff development. Key staff will complete advanced training in trauma and mental health informed approaches, while a dedicated trauma focus will be embedded within the morning Learning Approach throughout the year. Trauma informed practice will also form an integral part of the induction process for all new staff. Additionally, PROACT-SCIPr-UK training delivered across the year will be shaped by trauma-informed principles, complemented by NELFT training on effective conversations and conflict management.

All learning approaches operate under individual development plans that align with and contribute to the wider School Development Plan, which is written annually and reviewed each term. As part of the new project, the school's overarching Learning and Teaching



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Non-Negotiables, along with the specific Non-Negotiables for each Learning Approach, will be reviewed and updated to ensure they reflect a trauma-informed perspective.

Leaders will undertake a comprehensive review of their Behaviour Policy to ensure it is fully aligned with trauma informed principles. In addition, staff will work closely with external consultants to evaluate current practice and further strengthen the school's trauma-informed approach. As part of this process, Personal Support Plans will be reviewed to determine how best to record and understand each child's Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), enabling more tailored and responsive support.

Leaders will continue to strengthen embedded support systems by further developing the role of the Strategic Pupil Intervention Lead and enhancing the contribution of the newly appointed Social Work Assistant, who will work alongside the School Social Worker and the TEAM family support group to enrich the Team Around the Family. A clear referral form and system will be established for accessing Satellite Intervention staff, while the therapy team will continue refining the Multi-Disciplinary Team referral process to ensure alignment with trauma-informed principles. Additionally, the school will maintain and develop its partnership with the NELFT Emotional Wellbeing Team, enabling targeted group work for key pupils and the ongoing delivery of staff training.

An important aspect of this project is for leaders to continue to prioritise the wellbeing of staff and pupils by working towards achieving the Staff Wellbeing Award and relaunching the Staff Wellbeing Group to strengthen support across the school team. In addition, each Learning Approach School Council will incorporate a targeted focus on enhancing wellbeing and play, ensuring that pupil voice contributes to shaping a positive and nurturing school environment.



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Overview

Five Acre wood is an all through special school, serving 863 pupils across multiple sites. The school exemplifies a deeply inclusive approach, rooted in the belief that every child matters and should be supported to reach their full potential while preparing for real life experiences.

I was delighted to revisit Five Acre Wood this year and was genuinely impressed by the developments that have taken place since my previous visit. It is clear that the strong sense of passion and enthusiasm evident last year continues to underpin the work across the school.

The curriculum at Five Acre Wood is continuously adapted to meet the diverse needs of individual pupils. Significant effort is made to ensure that each pupil receives the targeted interventions necessary to support their progress and help them reach their full potential. Staff maintain detailed spreadsheets to record and update relevant information, providing valuable data that informs planning and contributes meaningfully to annual reviews.

One of the highlights of my visit was meeting a wonderful group of pupils who communicated confidently through gesture, speech, and movement to share what they enjoy most about their school. It was particularly refreshing to see two PMLD learners included in the group, their beaming smiles clearly reflected the joy and sense of belonging they experience as part of the Five Acre Wood community.

Leaders cultivate a culture of trust, encouraging staff to contribute innovative ideas that can be developed and implemented across the wider team. This approach has led to a number of creative initiatives that support a fully inclusive environment for all pupils. Engagement with new projects is strengthened by consistently revisiting the purpose behind them, ensuring that the school community clearly understands the positive impact these initiatives have on pupils.

Leaders at Five Acre Wood strive to always demonstrate what pupils can do, this provides a great model for classroom staff to do the same. Whole school initiatives such as Woodstock music festival and all the wonderful alternative learning environments such as the plane, lifeboat and bus all provide innovative spaces for pupils to engage and consolidate their learning. As I sat in the sensory reading den at the bottom of the plane I couldn't help but be overwhelmed with how lucky the pupils are to have such exciting spaces on offer to them. Their innovative projects come to fruition as a result of the drive and determination of the headteacher who is relentless in his pursuit for providing the very best education for pupils. The impact of the links made with external organisations has been far reaching and acted as a catalyst for others to make contact with the school to see what they can offer. Leaders embrace the "power of partnerships" and dedicate time to building relationships with external organisations for the benefit of their pupils.

The FAWrient Express continues to be a thriving success providing learning opportunities for over 100 pupils a week. I was fortunate to have my lunch on the train and was served by pupils who demonstrated confidence, pride, and enthusiasm for the work they were doing. While on the train I observed members of the local community coming in for their



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



lunch providing such a wonderful inclusive environment where pupils skills were showcased and celebrated.

Leaders demonstrate a strong ability to place the right people in roles where they can have the greatest impact, which underpins many of the school's innovative initiatives. By nurturing individual staff members' skills and passions, the school creates exceptional opportunities for both staff and pupils. A prime example of this is the continually expanding Forest School, which offers a rich range of hands-on experiences for all students. Forest School provides an exciting and supportive alternative learning environment for pupils. Within this setting, students are given autonomy, and adults are encouraged to follow their lead. The Forest School lead spoke passionately about how this environment enables pupils, particularly those who may be reluctant to express themselves in the classroom, to feel comfortable using their voices. During the visit, it was inspiring to observe a mixed-age, mixed-ability group working collaboratively on a pathing project. The pupils demonstrated strong ownership of their work and consistently high levels of engagement throughout the activity.

The school recognises that many families do not have adequate support from other local services and steps in to provide tailored guidance and interventions. As a result, they have employed their own social worker and social work assistant. The school's proactive approach ensures that families receive the practical and emotional support they need, with staff building one-to-one relationships with parents from the outset.

Leaders commit time and resources to fundraising initiatives that extend well beyond simply raising money. A notable example is the school's support for Leeds Castle in enhancing its accessibility and inclusivity for the wider community, a connection that originated through the school's own radio station. A heart-warming discussion with the Philanthropy and Events Officer showcased the rich variety of opportunities and experiences offered to pupils and their families outside of the school day such as attending a pantomime at the school a wonderful, immersive, Santa's Grotto.

Preparation for Adulthood and Careers support are a real strength of the school with staff ensuring that they work collaboratively with families to share what careers will look like for their children and creating a pathway to get them there. They also prioritise empowering pupils in the process and ensuring their voice is heard on what they would like their next steps to be.

Leaders are proud of the "home grown talent" evident across their staff team and they have a strong commitment to staff development, with employees frequently progressing into new roles within the school. This approach ensures that staff build a deep understanding of the school community and its pupils before acquiring the skills needed to succeed in their next position. It also positively supports staff recruitment and retention.

Leaders do not sit still at Five Acre Wood and are constantly reviewing practice to best meet the needs of all pupils. With all the wonderful work going on at the school they accept there is always more that can be achieved. During my visit, the headteacher shared a quote with me that sums their mindset up perfectly. "Mountain tops are small, and the



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



air is thin for a reason." I look forward to seeing what the future holds for the Five Acre Wood community, it is safe to say whatever it is will be spectacular.

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 Melissa Hendry

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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