



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



School Name: St Mary's Lewisham CE Primary School

Head/Principal: Christine Bernard

IQM Lead: Caroline Maseko

Date of Review: 20th May 2021 (Virtual)

Assessor: Sylvia Cramp

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group: Star Makers

Ambassador: Pauline Roberts

Date of Next Meeting: 8th July 2021

Next Cluster Group Meeting Focus: Supporting pupils with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools – lead by Newlands Academy – a specialist SEMH setting for boys aged 11-16

Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day:

Virtual Interviews with:

- IQM Lead/SENDCo
- Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Curriculum Lead
- Family Support Worker
- Teaching Assistants
- HLTA with pupils from Y2 to Y6
- Chair of Governors
- SEND Governor

Additional Evidence:

- Review of targets and action plan
- School website
- Ofsted report (July 2016)



Summary of Targets from 2019-2020

The School's targets from the previous year were based on the school developments focus of supporting all children to make good progress closely aligned to the increasing challenges for the whole school community presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Target 1: To monitor closely the impact of social isolation during the time of school closure and to identify and provide appropriate support for pupils whose learning and mental health were most affected by the experience.

St Mary's Lewisham CE Primary School is in an area of high deprivation where the wellbeing of many children and their families are impacted by lack of employment, food, and housing. The Family Support Worker explained how many parents have lost their jobs or have been put on furlough during lockdown, resulting in a marked rise in the need for food, housing, and mental health support. The SEND Governor described how the Head has knocked on doors to ask what support families need. Practical strategies have included hosting a food bank, organising hundreds of food parcels from the local church, and distributing food vouchers. The school website has also been used to signpost families to support services such as bereavement and housing.

To ensure children's wellbeing and progress in learning, staff have made every effort to communicate regularly with all families and ensure each child had the necessary resources for home learning. A key priority has been to hand out all school laptops and repair older devices for families with no technology. If families preferred, paper copies of home learning were posted home. Parents were encouraged to inform school about any barriers or anything not working, for example, some home learning was translated into Mandarin. A parent shared with me how easy it was for her son to go online as he had everything he needed, saying "I can always brag about St Mary's to other family members at different schools. I appreciate the way they go out of their way. They are always available by emails, texts, you can always call the school. They could print out work for us if needed, whatever needed."

Teachers monitored children's engagement with home learning on Teams for the older children or Purple Mash for younger classes. Online lessons were provided daily – whole class input session in the morning and smaller groups in the afternoon to allow for increased involvement.

The Curriculum Lead Teacher explained how the home learning curriculum was designed to encourage engagement from both children and their families. Both Read Write Inc. (RWI), Phonics and White Rose maths were provided online. Practical and creative tasks included making musical instruments, growing seeds and baking. Children in Key Stage 1 were sent sewing kits to design and make underpants for the story 'Aliens Love Underpants'. The results were shared during zoom meetings for everyone to enjoy. Many examples of excellent work have been published on the learning blog for each class.

Staff also recorded stories in different languages including Yoruba, Spanish, and Romanian. Staff recorded their own video of a song from 'Tangled' entitled 'When Will My Life Begin Again' to share with everyone. I thoroughly enjoyed the song and stories on the website and can understand how these genuine links provided reassurance for children isolated at home.



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The children I met spoke eloquently about the support they received from teachers during their lockdown experiences. One pupil had continued with home learning whilst being in India – the time difference worked well for her as she had been on video calls in the early afternoon. Another enjoyed home learning so much that their friend in Nigeria wanted to join in with the online lessons. Successful work could be uploaded onto the website for everyone to share.

Safeguarding remained a key priority over lockdown with an increase in disclosures being made. The Inclusion Team met weekly to review the children's welfare and engagement and weekly phone calls made. Where there were significant concerns, the Family Support Worker would call to offer emotional support and practical help including food and clothing. She worked with individual families to locate furniture and carpets, making their situation known to local charities and joining fundraising projects. Play packs, including pencils, games, and stickers, were sent home to provide additional activities. Places were provided in school for vulnerable families and when parents were struggling to cope.

On reopening, classes returned on a staggered timetable to avoid children feeling overwhelmed after so long at home. Attendance levels have increased, although a few children struggled when they came back. The Family Support Worker described how children were offered different opportunities to share any concerns including a 'worry space' in the playground. During lockdown, an area has been added to the website which children are beginning to use. A Y3 pupil explained how they could write their worries on a paper and put them in a box. "Teachers always help us" they continued. Another added, "When you have a worry you always know there's someone you can tell."

A Recovery Curriculum was developed to support social, emotional, and mental health throughout the school. This focused on reintroducing such topics as friendship and included additional playtimes with breakfast and fruit provided for all children. Staff were trained to help children explore their feelings in lessons including using poetry. School also used a Growth Mindset approach to encourage perseverance and increased resilience. Children identified as needing additional support from Pupil Progress meetings are currently attending extended learning groups after school, run by teaching assistants.

Target 2: To improve outcomes for all learners and particularly those with SEND by developing more effective TA interactions.

St Mary's Lewisham CE Primary School has invested in developing the skills and knowledge of all teaching assistants during lockdown. Online training has been available including updating safeguarding information, mental health counselling, teaching reading and spelling of high frequency words.

Teaching assistants described to me how they were now enjoying using their new skills and knowledge with the children. A wonderful example was given of a child in Key Stage 2 who was making progress with phonics but struggled reading words. Following daily input based on the training, this child was now reading words and writing in sentences. The teaching assistant enthusiastically described using little rhymes, looking for patterns and spelling words physically.

TAs are used in a variety of ways to support progress including providing targeted support in class, working with groups, and leading the class whilst the teacher works with a group. Pre-



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teaching maths concepts were regarded as an important strategy with immediate impact when children were able to take a full and active part in class lessons. One child I spoke to described how anyone having difficulties will be helped by a TA to make it less complicated. One of the teaching assistants spoke knowledgeably about the positive impact of supporting children in the whole class environment rather than withdrawing for intervention groups as they do not feel as if they are missing out and have the chance to work together. The TAs themselves spoke of the benefits of their involvement in planning and working in class so they knew what was going on.

It was highly evident that TAs use praise and growth mindset to build up self-confidence and perseverance. They described scaffolding tasks by providing support for a child before taking it away slowly. Praise was readily given for children giving it a go and mistakes were regarded as really good for learning. Successful activities were described including boxing up a story and helping children to retell it by giving them prompts. As the children gained confidence and were no longer scared of getting it wrong, fewer questions were needed.

Teaching assistants are regarded as integral members of the staff team and are well-utilised. They contribute to planning alongside class teachers and attend Pupil Progress meetings. As one explained, they are able to highlight a child's personal interests and enhance motivation. The teaching assistants felt valued and that their contributions were fully recognised, in addition to appreciating the impact they had in the classroom.

Target 3: To become a recognised Sanctuary School.

The Headteacher and her Senior Leadership Team are totally committed to developing their own model of a Sanctuary School and aspire to share this good practice across the Lewisham Borough. The school responds directly to the needs of the local community and works tirelessly to encourage the children and their families to understand how to use their experiences to fight for change.

Pupils at the school learn about being a good citizen through the Courageous Advocacy project, aligned with the values of the school. Each class is involved in a project to give hope to their local, national or global community. Children and parents, for example, have joined the police in campaigning for a safety crossing outside the school. Y1 and nursery collected items for homeless people which were distributed by members of staff and Y6 children have exchanged letters with children in Ghana.

For parents this includes practical advice in addition to encouraging them to recognise fundamental inequalities in bureaucratic systems and fight to get their voices heard. The school has developed a partnership with Citizens UK and are currently involved in a pilot scheme to provide funding for a solicitor in school who provides legal advice. Workshops are held for parents, for example, learning English and debt management. When the local Citizen's Advice service closed recently, the school stepped in to provide employment workshops and helped parents to write their CVs. Funding has been sought to provide laptops so that parents can become IT literate.

Inspired by the commitment of the Head, the whole staff team are involved in the campaign for the rights of families to British Citizenship. Far from deflecting the issue as political and to be left outside the school gates, St Mary's Lewisham CE is at the centre of raising awareness. As the



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Headteacher explained, unsettled immigration status affects the mental health and wellbeing of many children in the school. Families cannot travel and miss being able to visit family members; the NHS charges for any health care beyond emergency needs; benefits cannot be applied for; it is impossible to be allocated permanent housing. This instability and constant worry have a great impact on the wellbeing of the children by increasing anxiety and reflecting on school progress. The Headteacher noted the increased happiness and confidence she had seen in children once their home life was settled. Some families are still waiting to achieve this after ten years.

At the heart lies the ambition for the children and parents to realise that they can affect something that is much bigger than them and create change, developing from a local to a national level. Children and parents have had the opportunity to share this campaign with the Department of Health and the Department of Education. Children have been involved in consultations with the Home Office, sharing their experiences about the passport process. As the Head told me, this has been their opportunity to shine. Families have shared their stories via social media. Working with Citizens UK, sixty Christmas cards were sent to the CEO of Lewisham Hospital whilst Y6 collaborated with University College London to produce artwork for a leaflet. By coincidence, this assessment took place on the same day as the school was featured in a detailed article in The Financial Times, describing the difficulties experienced due to temporary status and the role the school played in supporting families in this situation. The school's success in supporting these families is reflected in the number of children who continue to travel to the school after being moved to new areas by the local authority.

To raise aspiration, children are provided with examples of life beyond the immediate community to open their eyes to what they can achieve. The Headteacher is adamant that children from the school will aim to take A levels and head to university. Older children have visited a lawyer's office to meet everyone and understand the breadth of jobs available. The staff there told the children how they had managed to get their particular job.

The impact of this commitment is becoming more obvious in the numbers of children reaching grammar school and past pupils achieving well in secondary education. The IQM Lead proudly told me of a past pupil who has applied to Cambridge University. She was equally proud of a child with additional needs who is obviously happy in their secondary education.

Agreed Targets for 2020-2021

Target 1: To close gaps in reading attainment resulting from school closures due to COVID 19.

The school has put in additional funding for 1:1 tutoring in addition to Catch Up funding. RWI is having a positive impact on reading. Parents to be invited into school about reading.

Target 2: To continue to develop children's wellbeing and resilience post COVID-19.

The school aims to embed Growth Mindset and support children who are struggling with their learning.

Target 3: As a Sanctuary School, to share our practice with other schools and organisations.



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The school continues to provide opportunities for the children to be ambassadors, giving them a voice and empowering them to change their life chances. They have already had a workshop with the mayor.

After discussion, the following additional recommendations were made:

- Follow pupils through secondary education and bring back ex-pupils to talk to children about what they have achieved.
- Opportunity to produce qualitative research evidence based on the campaign for British Citizenship. This could contribute towards an MA in Inclusive Education.

The Impact of the Cluster Group

St Mary's CE Lewisham Primary has continued to actively participate in its cluster group via MS Teams. The IQM Coordinator expressed her appreciation of being able to share ideas and strategies with other schools experiencing similar challenges in lockdown.

The impact within school from the previous meetings include:

- Shared experiences supporting children to return to school routines and expectations following lockdown, especially for the youngest children.
- Implementing strategies to address the language barriers experienced by parents who cannot access English in delivering blended learning.
- Reflection on media representation of different ethnic backgrounds and supporting children to access images that represent them.
- Continued discussion on diversity linked to texts used in the curriculum.
- How to carry out annual reviews for Education, Health and Care Plans.

Overview

St Mary's Lewisham CE Primary School is an extremely special place. The school vision shines through the school and guides all decisions and actions "...to be a learning community that promotes the unique gifts, wellbeing, and potential of every person" building on Jesus Christ's message of "equality, peace and justice."

The headteacher described to me how the school is not just about education but also about ensuring the foundations for learning are in place by supporting the welfare and wellbeing of the local community. The SEND Governor described a "strong positive ethos of togetherness and support which is a privilege to witness" whilst the Chair of Governors reflected that other people outside the school recognised the extraordinary achievements with the local authority tapping into what the school is doing.

The school has 241 pupils including nursery and serves a diverse social community. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above 60%, with some parents unable to speak English. The proportion of children with SEND is above average and over 40% of children are eligible for Pupil Premium funding. After a period of instability with 18 headteachers over 20 years and monitoring visits from Ofsted until July 2016, the school has blossomed into a supportive and aspirational community. The Chair of Governors recognises



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that the behaviour of children in the school is now completely different, and values have been embedded. She described a real sense of partnership with parents and a real community feel.

The Deputy Headteacher spoke warmly of their amazing staff team, always willing to go the extra mile. The school places emphasis on developing its staff, with two teaching assistants now teachers themselves. There is a stability in leadership all staff members are encouraged to speak up and share any issues, and great emphasis placed on valuing staff.

The curriculum is planned to provide rigorous teaching of key skills in reading, writing and maths using Read, Write Inc and White Rose maths. All progress is closely monitored and support provided in targeted groups. Maths and Science problem solving days are held every half term and photographs on the school website depict children of all ages exploring in small groups. Topic themes harness children's interests, for example, 'Stones and Bones' and 'Dragons,' covering all content prescribed by the National Curriculum with opportunities to use a wide variety of media. The school also supports extended activities, for example, paying for 30 children to attend sports camps over the summer holidays.

To encourage the development of the children's presentation skills, emphasis is placed on acquiring a good vocabulary. The IQM Lead explained how 'Destination Reader' is used to embed sentence stems. Children and staff also use non-verbal signs to extend responses, such as fists climbing on top of each other to show you want to build on a point. The success of this approach was demonstrated by the children I met, who spoke at length with great confidence.

The school emphasises empathy and caring for others in assemblies and the daily routines. A teaching assistant told me how she plans and delivers the 'Roots of Empathy' programme in Key Stage 2, which the children love. Using a real baby at the centre, she guides children through artwork and drama to explore respect, love, and empathy for each other. At the heart of each dilemma lies consideration of what would we do for a baby in this situation and teachers can refer to this in class.

All the children were extremely positive about their school experiences, describing it as "a very fantastic school" and telling me how much they enjoyed being challenged in their learning. A child from Y6 reflected on his increased knowledge of the world and others spoke of teachers presenting learning in a fun way.

The SEND Governor spoke knowledgeably of the empathy and support offered to all children overseen by the SENDCo who made sure what should happen did happen! He told me that "The caring and nurturing aspect of the school shines through" with emphasis placed on "giving according to need." One of the parents I spoke to reiterated the inclusive practice of the school given to her child with SEMH needs. She told me how he has achieved well as he knows he can knock on the door of anyone in the SLT if he feels he is having a meltdown. She described the staff as "super supportive – I can't fault them. I'm always in the loop."

The Covid pandemic has greatly affected the community of St Mary's Lewisham CE Primary School. Over lockdown, detailed planning and risk assessments resulted in the school opening successfully for up to 85 children daily, with increased cleaning schedules and weekly reviews. Only one bubble had to close during the whole lockdown situation. The school became a hub for keyworker children from other primary schools due to its proximity to Lewisham hospital. Responses from parents' surveys showed that all parents were very comfortable with the



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measures put in place. The school also supported parents and staff with Long Covid to avoid increased pressure. The mental health and wellbeing survey of staff was completely positive about the support from school leadership.

It was a privilege to meet the staff, children, parents, and governors of St Mary's Lewisham CE Primary and hear about their extraordinary achievements. The school shines as a beacon of hope supporting the wellbeing and development of the whole community. Despite lockdowns and increased poverty in an area of high deprivation, the school continues to respond with fearless determination and innovation.

I would wholeheartedly recommend that the school retains its Centre of Excellence Award following this review. The commitment shown by all staff and governors to ensuring every child and every family is offered the best educational experience demonstrates what is possible when a school is dedicated to raising achievement and aspirations within its local community.

Assessor: Sylvia Cramp

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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