



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



**School** Marfields Primary Academy  
Waggs Road  
Congleton  
Cheshire  
CW12 4BT

**Head/Principal** Mrs Sandie Isherwood

**IQM Lead** Mrs Sandie Isherwood

**Date of Review** 10th July 2024

**Assessor** Mr Kevin O'Neill

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

**Cluster Group** Inclusive Allsorts

**Ambassador** Ms Sarah Linari

**Next Meeting** Autumn 2024

**Meeting Focus** TBC

### **Cluster Attendance**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Summer 2022</b>	5th July 2022	No
<b>Autumn 2022</b>	9th November 2022	Yes
<b>Spring 2023</b>	21st March 2023	No
<b>Summer 2023</b>	30th June 2023	Yes
<b>Autumn 2023</b>	13th November 2022	Yes
<b>Spring 2024</b>	13th March 2024	No
<b>Summer 2024</b>	17th June 2023	Yes

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

The school is a valued, active, and very supportive member of its cluster, Inclusive Allsorts. The school and staff who have attended have benefited from membership in the group. The ethos of Marfields (Where Children Come First) is centred around relationships; they are open to everyone. The staff and pupils are happy and work together, and everyone is valued and nurtured to enable them to reach their full potential. The other schools in the cluster can see the value in this and view them as integral members of the cluster.



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### **Evidence**

- Reading for Pleasure PowerPoint Presentation.
- Blue Peter Badge Challenge Pupil Logs.
- School Blog and Website.
- Extra-curricular programme.
- New, diverse reading materials are stocked in the school library.

### **Additional Activities**

- Headteacher-led tour of the school.
- Informal classroom drop-ins.
- Resource Base Discussion and Future IQM Flagship Plans.
- Meetings with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), parents, staff, children, and the Chair of the Board of Governors.



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### Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

“Every child has the right to express their views, feelings, and wishes in all matters affecting them and to have their views considered and taken seriously.”

#### Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The initial discussion with the Principal and IQM Lead set the scene for the review, including how they had successfully worked on their Flagship Project over the last 12 months and how they had managed to include and provide appropriate education and support for all pupils and families. The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) approach has continued with a focus on reading, delivered by the English Lead, Key Stage 1 Lead, and Headteacher. Following the training, staff worked with their year group colleagues to review reading environments, share good practices, and plan together.

Pupils and their families continue to be a priority for the staff. School leaders have developed a coherent and consistent approach to the collection, sharing, analysis and use of data to check the children's progress and identify underachievement. The school can demonstrate that well-focused targets and appropriate intervention strategies have led to improved outcomes for individuals and groups of children. The school has seen a significant impact on both outcomes and wellbeing.

Parents of children in the school expressed their high levels of satisfaction with the pastoral care and personalised learning provision offered to their children. All parents agreed that their children enjoy coming to school where they are safe, taught well, are making good progress, get along well with their peers, and are encouraged to work hard and do their best. All parents agreed that the school is welcoming and feel that there are opportunities to become upskilled via school workshops and to play a more substantial role in both their child's learning and in the bigger school community picture.

I had the distinct pleasure of meeting with the Year 6 Lifeguards and learning all about their endeavours and how excited they were to receive their certificates before moving on to secondary school. They told me about their recent swimathon and how they raised almost £1,400 for good causes. At the time of the review, they were also juggling their final rehearsals for their end of school year performance, and I do not doubt that all those lucky enough to be in attendance would have gone home well entertained.

Academic achievements are very important but schools are about more than just that. For all pupils at Marlfields Primary Academy, it is vitally important that they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. It is also about learning to manage relationships with people, learning to make decisions and become independent and finding out what makes you tick. How schools prepare pupils to do this is vital.

I listened to how the Principal and her team were leading the school's Flagship Project, 'Yes, we all can communicate and be successful writers,' and their evaluation of its progress so far. Learners are at the heart of schools. The way that they view their experiences in the setting should be used to inform and influence how that setting operates. Actively inviting and, importantly, responding to a pupil's voice can have a



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variety of benefits. The wide-ranging and thought-provoking discussion provided great insight into the depths of the project and outlined the steps undertaken. This involved a comprehensive discussion about what the staff and school had provided over the last twelve months, going above and beyond what was expected and demonstrating extremely clearly the passion that staff have for teaching and school improvement.

It was a privilege to participate in wide-ranging and focused discussions with such passionate, dedicated and enthusiastic staff, delivering outstanding coalface teaching. Using pupil voice at Marlfields Primary Academy means inviting and listening to the views of all learners in their care. Pupil voice can be used to encourage children to reflect on their learning. This both encourages their metacognitive skills and also contributes to monitoring by teaching staff and management. Pupil voice strategies can be used to provide a forum for children to talk about what they have learned, any challenges they have faced, and what they would like to learn about. This can help you assess the effectiveness of your curriculum planning and delivery. World Book Day focused on text to transfer into writing, using drama through text to stimulate. Creating a culture where children know that their opinions are sought after, listened to, and acted upon has a wide range of benefits and was exactly the strategic intent behind the project. Probing curriculum Leads, children, and SLT as to the impact of the project at Marlfields and the reasons it was bearing fruit, I made the following determinations: There are a great number of ways that you might maximise pupil voice in any setting; however, there are some key principles that should be noted as having worked very well at Marlfields and ensured that the amplification of the pupil voice has improved self-esteem at an individual level and standards at system-level. These include:

- **Being purposeful.** The school was clear about the aims of the Flagship strategy, and this directly influenced the methods that they used. They gathered views on what children liked writing about and created the environment necessary to make these opportunities worthwhile and 'real'. They were prepared to engage with reluctant writers and how best to challenge aspects of the curriculum that weren't benefiting all. The school evaluated how well policies were working in practice. They frequently consulted with students as part of curriculum design and mapping. They gathered all the ideas before allocating budgets and were prepared to trial schemes across year groups, building up an evidence base and a position of strength from which to make future determinations. I met with students from Year 3 and explored with them their views regarding school improvement plans and how they have developed as young writers in Marlfields. The school has actively sought feedback from students regarding their learning and this has been done to inform their future planning and teaching.
- **Being committed.** I was struck by the levels of resilience of the Marlfields Primary Academy's team when truly taking a deep dive into pupil communication and how all learners wanted to express themselves. Pupil voice must not be viewed as a 'tick-box exercise'. Everyone involved needs to be committed to really listening to and acting on the information that is gathered. The levels of commitment of the team and the resources that they devoted to ensuring the true picture was understood and, more importantly, acted upon in a bespoke manner. The Marlfields Primary Academy 'way' is deeply embedded in not just doing school improvement 'things' but taking pride in doing them in the right fashion.



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- **Being transparent.** The ways that all leaders engaged with and effectively utilised the pupil voice in the school have been communicated through policies and regular updates so that all members of the community (including staff, pupils, parents, and Governors) can see in real-time the impact that it is having. This built momentum and buy-in. With cultural change, direction is more important and effective than speed.
- **Being strategic.** The opportunities for gathering pupil voices in the school were carefully planned, scheduled and resourced for them to be as effective as possible and, ultimately, for the pupil voice to become embedded in the culture of the school.
- **Being inclusive.** As ever, the team at Marlfields was flexible and adapted their strategies to make sure that every pupil was able to be heard. Early phonics continues to progress, and Ofsted commented on the high-quality offer given to pupils. Pupils need to know that it is safe and that it is important for them to express their views on what happens at school. They chose a range of methods to engage pupils' voices that reflected the age, needs, and preferences of the children.

The team at Marlfields Primary Academy has demonstrated that the best interests of the child are at the heart of all of their actions. A true commitment to the pupil's voice helps to illustrate the value that is placed upon pupils within the setting. Children working alongside staff and management, knowing that they have a key role to play, has helped further develop effective relationships between pupils and other members of the school community. These good relationships are a vital foundation for effective safeguarding, positive behaviour, and successful teaching and learning. The use of the school environment to promote wellbeing and provide facilities and resources for pupils who require extra support to regulate their emotions is so impressive. Every floor square inch is a learning space. The school partners with families across all age groups to better understand what it is that will enable children to enjoy learning and to be inspired enough to achieve their full potential. This means academically and socially, through music, sports arts, drama, and fun opportunities with their friends.

Leaders have developed a team that is committed to constantly improving and developing their skills so that children can achieve and make progress. An inclusive school is one where every pupil feels valued, represented, and respected in that community. Pupil voice strategies are used to improve inclusivity in the setting by giving individuals and groups of children a voice. Giving children the opportunity to put their views forward, to take responsibility for representing other members of the school community, and to contribute to important projects and decisions has helped develop their confidence, as well as their own speaking and listening skills. It is clear through all of the meetings, observations, and evidence during the review that the Flagship writing project is having a positive impact throughout the school and is embedded into everyday practice. Term by term, the school has developed pupils' language capabilities, found different ways of improving fluency in pupil reading, taught reading comprehension through modelling and supported practices, developed pupils' transcription and sentence construction through extensive practice, provided targeted teaching and support by accurately assessing pupil needs and used high-quality structured interventions to help pupils who are struggling with their writing.



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

The school has an experienced Inclusion Lead who will be driving forward the Flagship Project next year, 'Moving Onward and Upward', building resilience in all our communities.

The school intends to continue to work on the strong start made in evaluating their intent, implementation and the impact of the writing curriculum on offer within the school. Key to this is ensuring that the wellbeing of staff is considered while addressing the key priorities of their recent Ofsted (March 2024) and continuing to build resilience in pupils and staff through all that they do.

Families are finding the cost-of-living crisis a challenge, and the school will continue to support finding solutions to ensure that their poverty proofing offer is making a difference to their families and is supporting their pupils to focus on their learning. On the date of my visit, the Principal was able to share with me details of a generous donation that had just come into the school, the type of donation that she has typically sourced or enabled to flow into the school's account throughout her tenure. Her business acumen and selfless devotion to securing the funds necessary to improve the facilities and provisions at Marlfields have served hundreds of children and families so well over the years. Both the indoor and outdoor areas of the school are well-resourced and are maintained to a very high standard of cleanliness, safety and maintenance by the site staff.

The school has an exciting new resource base that will be ready for September 2024. The existing provision is exemplary as a fluid model of time spent between the classroom and resource base. The Inclusion Lead at the school has played an integral part in the new design, resourcing and bespoke application. It will be of significant interest in the next year's review to learn about its implementation and growth. The school has a relatively new Vice-Principal in post and together with a new Principal in post for September 2024, the task will be to carry on the excellent work of the retiring Principal and to ensure that Marlfields Primary Academy remains a beacon school for inclusion. The actions required to innovate and bring about further improvement have already been identified and monitored. Leaders have an excellent capacity for further improvement. Leaders at all levels, including Early Years, communicate ambition and high expectations. All leaders have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum and the best practices in teaching and learning.

All schools should be truly inclusive. By that, I mean inclusive in the real sense, and I follow the example of Marlfields Primary Academy by including children and their parents:

- In decision-making.
- In setting targets linked to the child's Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) or Special Educational Needs (SEN) support plan.
- As part of collecting information about what is important to the child, now and in the future, and how best to support them.

Inclusive Leadership in Marlfields means strengthening the ties between families and schools through a positive view of diversity; fostering the feeling of belonging through relationships based on mutual trust, collaboration, and joint responsibility; facilitating



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participation in decision-making; urging teachers to reflect critically on their practice and to be actively involved in educational projects aimed at meeting the needs of all students and their families; and establishing shared commitments based on values of fairness, equality, and social justice. Leaders at Marlfields Primary Academy provide extensive support to parents, pupils, and staff alike. With the support of a highly skilled Governing body, leaders have created a harmonious community where everyone maintains the highest standards of learning and behaviour every day.

Marlfields Primary Academy continues to move from strength to strength in terms of its inclusive practices. Their mission is to provide an inclusive education in a safe, happy, supportive, and stimulating environment where all the needs of the individual learner are met. Students are inspired to be the best they can be, enabling them to become responsible citizens. Children at Marlfields in receipt of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are a significant part of the big picture that makes up this wonderful school; there is no division here. Academic excellence and effective Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision are all part of the same picture, and an inclusive school cannot fulfil its modus operandi if it is letting some of its pupils down.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and Governors have a deep understanding of the potential safeguarding risks that pupils in the school might face. Leaders carefully weave activities into the curriculum to develop pupils' awareness of and resilience to the potential dangers around them. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They appreciate the need to follow rules for everyone's safety. All staff are vigilant and ensure pupils are kept safe. Leaders keep a close eye on the most vulnerable pupils. They are well-trained to identify, help, and manage safeguarding risks for all pupils.

The Governing Body at Marlfields Primary Academy is well trained and knowledgeable about inclusion and is wholly capable of a challenge and support role. Staff are aware of the Governor's roles and responsibilities and their support for an inclusive ethos. Pupil Premium and other identified funding are used creatively to support learners and ensure value for money in terms of their progress.





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### Overview

Marlfields Primary Academy is a single-form entry primary school in Congleton, Cheshire, one that is at the heart of its broad and diverse community and moreover one that ensures that the community it serves, acts as the heartbeat of the school. Marlfields is a very special school. It is small enough to allow all staff to know all the pupils, whether they teach them or not. The staff are highly committed to the aims and ethos of the school and dedicated to developing the full potential of all. The school's provision is tailored to meet the specific needs of all pupils so that they start to make at least good or better progress from the moment they join the school. It is a friendly, vibrant, and superbly inclusive primary school where pupils are challenged to be aspirational, where they support their hopes and dreams and guide them as they search for their pathways to success and fulfilment. They aim to create a nurturing and inspirational learning community for their pupils that encourages and supports them in the pursuit of their ambitions. As a staff, they are committed to removing barriers to learning and have the highest expectations of each other, recognising each pupil as an individual, celebrating the diversity of the local community, and treating everyone with the utmost respect. Superbly inclusive statements that underpin everything that happens in the school.

Everyone involved with the school, including Governors and parents, is actively engaged in enacting their inclusive vision, and every member of staff has a responsibility to ensure everyone is included. This is at the heart of their superb ethos and vision, where staff work tirelessly to ensure that successful outcomes happen, with interventions and strategies evolving and developing as the school's students and families change over time. Staff know their pupils, families, and community very well and there is a determination to help everyone be the best they can be. There is a clear vision for the school and all children who attend, with a relentless drive for all to succeed, but also to support their colleagues.

The school has a committed Principal and School Leader. Her vision is to ignite a love of learning that enables every child to achieve their very best. Through every action and leadership behaviour, she models her aim for all her team to provide excellent teaching and genuine nurture that will enable all the children in Marlfields Primary Academy to be happy, resilient, creative citizens who have the skills, knowledge, and passion to change the world.

Marlfields Primary Academy is an outstandingly inclusive school because the school's very strong inclusive identity permeates all aspects of the learning environment of the school. Pupils are confident and articulate and demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding appropriate to their age and ability. Teaching is inspiring and actively engages pupils who demonstrate outstanding behaviour and a desire for learning and improvement across the school. Display boards are immaculate, and contemporary, and enhance the learning environment.

What stood out very clearly from this personable review is the pride staff feel in working at Marlfields Primary Academy and the way that they engage with their colleagues, the children, and their families to meet their needs, often going above and beyond what is expected of them. They achieve this through sustainable partnerships with families and carers, providing excellent levels of advice and support. The school adds value to all learners. From all starting points, the goal of positive migration (in terms of pupil achievements and personal growth) is seen as imperative, and





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strategically, Senior Leaders create opportunities for all pupils to make progress academically and holistically. There is a family-oriented approach and feel within the school, where everyone understands their role but is approachable and works in collaboration to achieve successful outcomes. The Harry Potter house teams are a huge hit. The children are cared for and provided for at the point of need, but the long-standing relationship with IQM has further developed the mindset of the school with a range of creative and 'outward looking' ideas. Support for each other and collaboration are key to everything that happens at the school, as is liaising with external partners and agencies to ensure all aspects of wellbeing for their pupils' lives are met.

The school rightly prides itself on superb pastoral care, actively promoting equality and diversity, and is therefore an extremely welcoming, superbly inclusive and extremely caring school. Everyone involved at all levels is fully committed to maximising the achievement of every child. Staff have accessed Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on adaptive provision and put this into their everyday practice. Classrooms are dyslexia-friendly, autism-friendly spaces and the school has a sensory room that is in use most of the day. The school and its community should be justifiably proud of their success in this respect, where no one is left out or behind. In terms of inclusion, Marlfields Primary Academy is a progressive and boundary-pushing school. This is a setting where the commitment to superb care, nurture, and support is at the very core of its inclusive approach. This is a fact I can attest to from the evidence of this review, where everyone involved with Marlfields is committed to the inclusion ideals of the school and is prepared to do whatever it takes to overcome the barriers.

Discussions with key members of staff during the review confirmed that the school continues to successfully address all eight elements of the IQM award. All teaching and non-teaching staff feel well supported by the school and feel that they have opportunities to progress and that the school is extremely inclusive and is like a family. Meetings with staff demonstrated their professionalism, enthusiasm, inclusivity, and passion for teaching and education. It is clear from these conversations that everyone involved with the school is highly invested in providing the best possible experience for their pupils, and this has an enormously positive effect on their peers and their pupils and is something they should be proud of.

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: Mr Kevin O'Neill**

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

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