



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



Overview

The success of Fawbert and Barnard Infant's School can be measured by its unwavering commitment to inclusion. It is difficult to summarise the moral purpose that is at the very heart of the school or to capture principles that direct every decision made. Quite simply, inclusion generates so much energy within the whole school and exemplifies a passion that is expressed by every member of the community. Inclusion is the hallmark, and the strength of this passion giving the entire school community a very unique identity. The Headteacher and senior leaders have created an environment that is strengthened by a confident and highly competent staff team demonstrating strong support for the principles underpinning the school values. A shared belief in their ability to unveil the potential within every child is strengthened by the carefully planned systems that demystify barriers to learning. Children are allowed to be who they are so that the adults in the school can sensitively assess their individual needs and put into place the support that will help them flourish. During the last twelve months the demography of the school has changed with more pupils experiencing additional needs and Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Unsurprisingly the school is oversubscribed with applications for places; an unusual situation within Hertfordshire which has a falling birthrate with many schools struggling to sustain pupil numbers.

A meeting with parents of children with additional needs provided insight into the distress that can dominate their lives as they search for a setting that will welcome and nurture their child. The gift of time to be listened to was identified as a special feature of the school as one parent described her conversation with the Headteacher who spoke to her immediately when she first made contact. Even during that introductory conversation, he started to describe the child's entitlement and how support would be put in place to support a transition. Her child was not regarded as another potential problem but as a young person with some complex needs who would be welcomed by the school. Parents described the way the InCo gathered information from previously attended settings and understood the needs of their child so that supportive structures were in place when they joined the school. Her care, compassion and welcome coupled with an astute understanding of individual situations and the education system, removed so many barriers. One parent described her anguish as she had frequently received phone calls from a previous setting to collect her 'disruptive pre-school child' often only allowed to remain there for fifteen minutes. It took her some time to realise that this was not the approach at this school and even commented on the kindness and understanding of the office team who made her feel that her child was a "beautiful little person." Staff at the school have helped the whole community value the important place of inclusion. One parent commented on the kindness and understanding expressed by other parents of children in the school. She described a situation where a mother of a child with additional needs received a call from another mother whose child was about to have a birthday party. The caller suggested that she might like to bring her child along a little earlier so that they could become familiar with the party environment before the other children arrived. Such kindness and sensitivity are evident throughout the school.

Parents and staff greatly appreciate the decision of the Headteacher to employ a Speech and Language Therapist in school for one day each week. Parents described long delays experienced in accessing this service via the usual Local Authority route, so to have weekly support within the school is an amazing asset. The therapist is able to work with individual pupils with specific needs and also advises parents, and professionals of appropriate strategies. Her weekly presence and contribution to learning continues to have a very powerful impact.



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A key feature of learning within the school is that every member of staff acknowledges their responsibility to understand the needs of individual children. Extensive background work by the InCo, endorsed by the Headteacher and his Deputy Headteacher, has resulted in accessible documentation that defines the needs and the responsibility to ensure appropriate provision for all children in the school. Curriculum accessibility is seen as key to inclusive teaching and learning, and straightforward training and documentation demonstrate how this can be achieved. For example, the 'Class on a Page' leaflet exemplifies the diversity within specific class groups. Staff are reminded of ethnicity, as well as barriers to learning such as medical, pastoral or language needs as well as pupil premium entitlement. Ten non-negotiable strategies for learning have been devised by the staff team and applied across the curriculum, with further advice about how these could be actioned within subject teaching and learning. These include reminders such as consideration of multi-sensory approaches, vocabulary, prior knowledge, relevance, memory, and questioning and are tailored to respond to the discipline of different subjects. Whilst the idea for this approach was instigated by senior leaders, the concept of ten non-negotiables was unpicked and recreated by the entire staff team working together.

Senior leaders have identified the professional potential in all members of staff and have sensitively distributed responsibilities. Interaction between teachers and members of the support team demonstrates the interdependence and respect that acknowledges the skill and contribution of all. In-house training sessions are made electronically available so that they can be accessed by all members of the team and be revisited when staff wish to refresh their knowledge and understanding. In a similar way informative meetings for parent groups are recorded and made available on the school website so that parents who are unable to attend can access information at a more convenient time. These sessions have included a focus on Big Writing, Phonics and Curriculum information. The school is a learning community, continually embracing and sharing new thinking and ideas. Pupils and their families are well supported and involved, seeing themselves as an extension of the school team.

During the last twelve months the demography of the school has changed with more pupils joining with additional needs and Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs). A new but experienced member of the teaching team described the inclusive nature of the school and greatly appreciates the support she has received from the InCo. She described the school as "one of a kind" noting that there are no limits to children's learning and that, because of the clarity of leadership, there is no unnecessary paperwork.

The Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Curriculum Leader is also a qualified counsellor and, in this role, has the opportunity to work with pupils who need professional, emotional support. Specific time in school is allocated for her sessions with children who are experiencing trauma or attachment concerns. Parents understand her role and meet with her so that they can contribute and support her sensitive work with their child. As the curriculum leader for PSHE she has developed an overview of areas addressed in lessons and school assemblies. The professional scheme adopted by the school is SCARF - an acronym for Safety, Caring, Achievement, Resilience and Friendship, promoting positive behaviour and wellbeing.

Members of the staff team oversee the process of transition so that pupils are well supported when they join the school in Early Years or move on to the Junior school at the end of Year 2. Parents of the youngest children are invited to a Cheese and Wine evening so that they can meet other parents and become acquainted with key members of staff within



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an informal gathering. They receive a support pack containing information and activities for their child and are offered one-to-one meetings with the staff. Stay and Play sessions are part of the transition process and initially children join the school on a reduced timetable so that they gradually get used to the new setting. Similarly, during Year 2 extra activities are planned so that pupils regularly visit and meet the staff team at the nearby Junior school. Visits for sports days and Christmas plays are well established and staff from the Junior school visit their new intake to establish positive relationships prior to the transition.

The newly appointed Inclusion Teaching Assistant gives one-to-one support to a pupil with additional needs and particularly appreciates the support she receives from the speech therapist. Following the Gestalt approach, she described how she responds to echolalic responses in order to help a child understand the difference between repeating a phrase and responding with appropriate actions. She is proud of the opportunity to further develop her experience of working within such an inclusive environment and spoke enthusiastically about enrichment activities planned within the setting.

The school has introduced an innovative approach to support identified children in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding. Currently, two pupils are attending after-school sessions with a highly experienced Teaching Assistant. They revisit topics that have been covered during normal class time to embed learning and identify gaps or misunderstandings. At the same time, the Teaching Assistant builds a positive relationship with the pupils who enjoy having one-to-one attention beyond the formal classroom setting. The positive impact of these sessions is far-reaching as families are pleased that their children are receiving special attention, strengthening the bond between home and school.

School Governors are immensely proud of the school and fully endorse the strong commitment to inclusion. They visit regularly and clearly understand the school's spending priorities. For example, they track provision for those children in receipt of Pupil Premium funding and the involvement of pupils with additional needs in extra-curricular activities. A current priority is to further develop the overall Governor induction process. Inclusion forms the backbone of this school and presents the very finest example of inclusive practice. It is a school where difference is celebrated and understood and a place that provides exceptional learning opportunities for all of its pupils. In the words of the Headteacher "adaptive inclusive practice is not an add on" but is at the heart of every decision made.

I am firmly of the opinion that Fawbert and Barnard Infants' School fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark to maintain its status as a Centre of Excellence. I therefore recommend that the school retains its Centre of Excellence 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 Centre of Excellence status.

Assessor: Mrs Mary Hewitson

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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