



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



**School Name:** Peartree Spring Primary School  
Hydean Way  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire  
SG2 9GG

**Headteacher:** Mrs Teresa Skeggs

**IQM Lead:** Mrs Emily Dean

**Date of Review:** 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**Assessor:** Ms Mary Hewitson

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

**Cluster Group:** Anglian Inclusion Group

**Ambassador:** Mr Roger Leeke

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**Meeting Focus:** TBC

### **Cluster Attendance**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Autumn 2022</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2022	Yes
<b>Spring 2023</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2023	No
<b>Summer 2023</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	N/A
<b>Autumn 2023</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2023	Yes

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

Following staff changes at a senior level, the newly appointed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCo) at Peartree Spring Primary School has only recently become the leader for IQM within the school.

A senior member of staff attended the Cluster Meeting at South Green Primary, an experience that stimulated considerable reflective thinking. A significant focus was behaviour for learning and the essential components of resilience and a growth mindset in overcoming barriers. Following a thorough review of current practice, the host school used the views of all stakeholders, ie. pupils, parents and staff to develop a unique approach, tailored to the needs of their community. The teacher from Peartree was able to disseminate the strategic thinking that underpinned the project and then identify the specific changes that had been made. The examples of communication with pupils and parents that were shared during the session may well have a far-reaching effect and influence practice in the schools that were represented in the Cluster.



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### **Evidence**

During the assessment day, I met with:

- The newly appointed SENDCo.
- The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher.
- The teacher responsible for leading the personal development of pupils and staff.
- Teaching Assistants (TAs) providing one-to-one and classroom support.
- The Head Girl and Head Boy.
- The Family Liaison Worker.
- The Physical Education (PE) and Wellbeing Lead.
- The Curriculum Lead.
- The Delivering Special Provision Locally (DSPL) Lead.
- A parent of a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

### **Additional Activities:**

- A tour of the school with a special visit to Julia's Garden and the newly refurbished Sensory Room.
- Telephone discussions with the school's IQM Lead both and after the assessment day.
- School website.



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### Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project 2022-2023

**"I see you, I hear you, I belong" Professor Paul Miller.**

#### **To involve the whole school in 'Inclusion 24'.**

The primary aim of 'Inclusion 24' is to increase and improve opportunities for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) so that they can engage and participate in Physical Education (PE) and sport. In addition to improving the quality and breadth of experience for pupils during lessons, extra-curricular opportunities have also increased. Monster Phonics is being incorporated within PE lessons for Key Stage 1 (KS1) pupils, thus reinforcing literacy teaching as well as challenging physical skills. The subject lead is considering Zones of Regulation so that during physical activity children will be helped to develop a greater understanding of emotions. The use of SwimPix cards is being explored and although they can be a useful support for all learners, they are specifically designed to support those with additional needs such as anxiety, hearing impairment, or for those for whom English is not their first language. SwimPix enables inclusive lessons through an accessible and fun teaching resource.

#### **To develop Julia's Memorial Garden.**

Julia's Garden is a beautiful memorial to a pupil who passed away shortly after moving to her secondary school. It is sensitively positioned in a discreet but not hidden area of the school grounds and has been beautifully designed to provide a peaceful haven for all members of the school community to visit. The entrance is under a huge metal rainbow which was designed and installed by a parent, leading to winding footpaths and flower beds and an open-fronted timber gazebo where visitors can rest awhile. Brightly painted butterflies, Julia's favourite creature, have been carefully placed on shrubs as a visual reminder of the pupil who is remembered.

In July, Julia's family were invited to attend a small opening ceremony which was a time for the staff who knew Julia to gather with her family and talk together. Pupil leaders help to maintain the peace and tranquillity of the space which is often visited by pupils and staff for moments of reflection.

#### **To improve outcomes for pupils with SEND - to accelerate progress and close attainment gaps.**

Attendance at all Pupil Progress meetings means that the SENDCo is better placed to assess progress and attainment and to monitor extra provision. Early identification of emerging needs and of those pupils who may be falling behind in their learning remains a high priority. The SENDCo and a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) monitor the cohort folders which are used to ensure that planning is shared with class teachers and the support team. This is now an important activity within the monitoring schedule. Training for Teaching Assistants (TAs) has been reviewed with a keen focus on personal development and is monitored by a member of staff with a specific responsibility. Staff are competent in using the 'Communicate In Print' programme and the resource is supporting children with a range of needs. Chromebooks are being used to help those with working memory issues and voice note apps are helping pupils who struggle with spelling and handwriting.



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

- To further explore Personal Development and inclusivity within the classroom setting.

An awareness of the emotional deprivation caused by COVID-19 has helped staff appreciate the long-lasting impact of the epidemic and other identified causes of anxiety. A focus on 'inclusivity within the classroom' will be further developed and will involve the whole school community in specific initiatives.

- To further explore outcomes from the Great Representations project and how these might influence future developments.

Involvement in this county-wide project has had a huge impact on the members of the leadership team who represented Peartree Spring Primary School. Implications of knowledge gained will help the planning of training and influence discussions and actions within the school.

- To continue the journey of forming a Federation between Peartree Spring Primary School and a nearby primary school.

The Executive Headteacher of Peartree Spring Primary School is already managing both schools. By sharing the expertise and experience of her team at Peartree she is leading a second school on a journey to excellence. Her skill as a leader is exceptional and is strengthened by the willingness of staff in her original school to share their achievements and to welcome the challenge of supporting those in the other setting. This work will continue.



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### Overview

As an IQM Assessor, I am privileged to have visited Peartree Spring Primary School on several occasions. Each visit has demonstrated the ability of the Headteacher to engage the school community in an impressive journey of continuous improvement, unveiling exciting new initiatives, as well as the strengthening of those already in place. Most recently she has become an Executive Headteacher and is responsible not only for the leadership of Peartree Spring but also for a nearby single-form entry primary school. She recognises talent and skill within her workforce and empowers others by facilitating professional development and encouraging and rewarding innovation and commitment. Since my first visit to the school five years ago, some senior roles have changed but this has not impacted negatively on the high quality of provision for pupils. New post holders have been selected for their tenacity and their ability to focus on the needs of the children and the wider social community served by the school.

The non-teaching, newly appointed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCo) had prepared meticulously for the assessment day and had planned an agenda that built on my previous visits without replicating information. I was able to meet some staff who had not been involved in previous IQM assessments, bringing a fresh focus to a very well-planned day. As SENDCo she oversees provision for the most vulnerable pupils in the school and highlights how needs are acknowledged and met in every area of the curriculum. Her passion (and that of her predecessors) for the highest level of inclusion has led the school to gain an enviable reputation which is exemplified by the very high numbers of parents applying for a place for their child. Despite falling roles experienced by many schools, Peartree Spring is hugely oversubscribed with parents outside of the catchment applying for places.

The school environment is stunning, providing an exceptional environment that must feel like a haven for families and children attending. Well-designed displays of children's work and many encouraging quotes and thought-provoking statements show the intent to respect every child's effort and aspiration for the future. For example, the words on one wall in a communal area state:

'We are beautiful.  
We are unique.  
Here at Peartree Spring  
We are learning to spread our wings'

Senior leaders recognise the depth and challenge within the concept of inclusion and are open and responsive to developing their understanding by embracing new ideas and initiatives. Every member of staff is a champion of inclusion and has been empowered to respond to situations that reflect the openness that defines the leadership within the school. At the same time, specific responsibilities have been distributed to individuals so that as far as possible every facet of this enormous concept can be explored. For example, the work of the SENDCo is supported by a member of staff with a specific focus on inclusion within the classroom. She can concentrate on resources available to staff and pupils, identify gaps and access external opportunities to assist day-to-day learning. Like many practitioners, she is aware of the specific concerns for the development of some pupils as a result of COVID-19 and the key developmental stages that have been missed. Social and Emotional issues have been



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identified and her insight has enabled her to support pupils and staff. Key elements of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) lessons are integrated within all areas so that children can receive direct teaching about feelings and emotions when it is most needed. A range of picture books produced by the 'Abilities in Me Foundation' helps children understand themselves and their feelings and appreciate that a disability need not limit their aspirations. Links with outside agencies such as the University of Hertfordshire are strong and all opportunities for external support are explored.

Peartree Spring Primary School supports several children with exceptionally high levels of need, often requiring ongoing one-to-one support. Two members of the staff team spoke enthusiastically of their work with the children they support and the various resources and training opportunities available to them as practitioners. Senior leaders demonstrate the confidence and trust they have in these practitioners who are constantly reviewing their approach to enhance the lives of the most vulnerable. These adults love their work, joyfully identifying even the smallest steps in progress. For example, one child calls his supporting staff member 'Grandma' which she recognises as a compliment and as evidence of great progress. The child who has profound needs has given her a name that best describes his respect and affection for her.

'I see you, I hear you, I belong', is a quotation from Professor Paul Miller and has now been adopted by Peartree Spring Primary School as the overriding statement for their Flagship status. The Deputy Headteacher heard the Professor speak when she led the school's participation in a Hertfordshire cross-phase initiative entitled 'Great Representations'. The programme aimed to bring together school leaders who have a 'strong ethos of anti-racism, to better understand how schools become greater at inclusion, diversity and equity.' Involvement in the project involved listening to inspirational speakers (such as Professor Miller) and exploring strategies through meetings and sharing of experiences. Peartree Spring is a diverse community with 30% of the children having Black, Asian or minority ethnic heritage. The importance of being involved in the project is acknowledged and valued by the whole school community as leaders considered how children in their schools would answer questions such as:

- Do you see and hear role models in school who are from the same culture as you?
- Do you feel you belong to our community?

Colleagues from the participating schools wrote reflective journals of their learning and the activities undertaken related to promoting race equity in their schools.

The Year 6 Head Girl and Head Boy proudly described their experiences of being pupils at the school. The variety of pupil 'roles of responsibility' demonstrated further the inclusive nature of the community as there are various leadership tasks undertaken by them. These include involvement in the School Parliament, the Eco Council, play leadership and supervision of Julia's Garden and the Peartree Radio Station. The pupils also commented on the importance of the diverse menu provided at lunch time which always includes meat and veggie options, street food, a salad bar and a delicatessen option. It is important to note that the dining room itself is incredibly welcoming and has been carefully designed to represent a top-of-the-range café. The pupils are extremely proud of the school's achievement by becoming the winners of the Times Educational Supplement (TES) School of the Year 2023 competition. They celebrated with a party outside that included bouncy castles and ice lollies!





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The work initiated by the Family Liaison Worker (FLW) continues to have an incredible impact on families. She is very aware of the pressures on children and their parents, often involving acute financial pressures. She supports families with applications for benefits and grants as well as those whose children experience additional needs and disability. She described the extra food bank provision that has been made available to families in urgent need of support. This is a separate food store within the school which can help families, often on a Friday, when other agencies are closed. Non-perishable foods such as pasta, rice and tinned food can be collected ensuring that families can feed their children over the weekend. This resource is also made available to parents and staff of the second school in the Federation. The FLW ensures that she passes on information to vulnerable families about external pastoral interventions and organises a range of meetings/courses for parents within the school. Most recently she has organised sessions to address diet and family menus. Reflecting on the impact of COVID-19 and its legacy she has noticed that a change in work patterns means that many parents either do not take children to school themselves or are rushing to take calls if they are working from home. Consequently, there is little time to talk and make friends at the school gate, increasing feelings of loneliness and isolation. The meetings that she organises help to build friendships and support structures within the groups.

The Wellbeing Lead has developed a unique approach to her responsibilities by exploring opportunities within her subject specialism of Physical Education, to improve the quality of emotional wellbeing for pupils in school. Competitive physical activity helps pupils identify their emotions and find ways to cope with challenging situations. For some, physical activity can take their mind off worries, help to connect with others and grow self-confidence. The Wellbeing Lead believes that through her PE lessons, she can help pupils build resilience to negative experiences and find positive ways to deal with anxiety. She uses her knowledge of the Zones of Regulation to help children understand that feelings are complicated. By using the visual representation of colour, she helps pupils build their understanding of their feelings so that they can move through their response to emotion in a controlled way. The use of sensory circuits is being explored and may be introduced as another way of helping pupils maintain their mental wellbeing.

Commitment to a creative, inclusive and relevant curriculum at Peartree Spring is well established. Subject Leaders work in teams and ensure that there is regular curriculum review, rigorous monitoring and consistency of language. Some published resources are used to support learning and are integrated into the creative approach in lessons. The ethos of 'Learn, Believe, Achieve' guides the child-centred, creative approach so that pupils experience an exciting curriculum on a day-to-day basis. The use of high-quality, meaningful literature is an important experience for pupils and learning is enriched through the exploration of aspirational texts and characters. These 'hook pupils into lessons' and help them develop a long-lasting love of discovery. Creative spaces in classrooms are more than role-play areas as they allow pupils to discover learning through different challenges and experiences.

Hertfordshire has implemented local control of provision for pupils with additional needs. The County has been divided into nine areas each managing its provision through the structure known as 'Delivering Special Provision Locally', hence the acronym DSPL.



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This is 'a partnership approach where parents, staff in early years settings and schools, further education colleges, local authority officers and representatives from other agencies, work together as part of an area group, reviewing and developing the range of provision and support services available to their local community'.

Peartree Spring is the lead school for the Stevenage area, which is known as DSPL2, because of its geographical location within the County. The overall manager is based at the school and by involving many professionals, she has carefully structured a style of leadership that coordinates rather than directs the allocation of provision. The primary aim is to help pupils cope with the stress that can develop in their mainstream setting and to help staff within that setting develop new strategies to support the child. Initially, an assessment of need may lead to advice for the school and/or outreach support from an appropriate agency. The Headteacher of Peartree Spring is the Lead Specialist Behaviour Teacher for The Willows which offers short-term provision for primary school-aged children who are at risk of permanent exclusion and short-term support for those who have been permanently excluded. The Manager of DSPL2 stressed the importance of the roles of the many professionals involved in its leadership and their contribution to decision making.

A meeting with a parent of a child with profound SEND confirmed my view that Peartree Spring is a school that does not see its pupils in isolation but considers the pressures and concerns of parents. This family has only recently joined the school community and has been overwhelmed by the care and support they have received. Daily conversations with the class teacher mean that the mother has a good understanding of how her non-verbal child has coped during the day. She repeatedly stressed how lucky she is to have secured a place for her child in this school and is grateful for the ongoing support as she awaits the outcome of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) application.

I have no hesitation in endorsing Peartree Spring's status as an IQM Flagship School.

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 Mary Hewitson

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

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