



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



School Name: West Rainton Primary School
West Rainton, Houghton le Spring, DH4 6RN

Head/Principal: Mrs Alison McDonough

IQM Lead: Mrs Susan Firth

Date of Review: 21st October 2022

Assessor: Craig Wright

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group: Trail Blazers A

Ambassador: Ms Emily Carroll

Date of Next Meeting: 6th March 2023

Next Cluster Group Meeting Focus: TBC

Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day:

- Self-Evaluation Report
- School Website
- School Tour (led by Deputy Head)
- Ofsted Report (December 2017)
- Observation of Social Times
- Pupil Tour
- Examples of Student Work
- School Displays
- Staff Interviews
- Parent Interviews
- Governor Interviews

Meetings held with:

- Inclusion Quality Mark Lead/Deputy Head Teacher
- Head Teacher
- Chair of Governing Body
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Lead
- Parents
- Children from Year 3, 4 and 6.



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Summary of Targets from 2021-2022

West Rainton Primary School's targets for this year have been based on the school development focus of ensuring progress in learning and strengthening aspects of the curriculum whilst reaching out to recreate links with parents and the community following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Target 1: Reinstate our regular events to support the school's return to normal post COVID.

West Rainton Primary School sits at the heart of its local community. There is an abundance of community events which mark days of national significance such as Remembrance Day as well as local events which are part of the children's heritage such as the Big Meet. Children at West Rainton are provided with a wide range of experiences which allow them to develop an exceptional depth of cultural, musical and sporting knowledge. Recently, students were given the opportunity to watch an Ice Hockey game which has sparked an interest in the sport for a number of children.

Pre-Pandemic, the school created links with the local nursing home. Leaders at West Rainton have maintained this relationship despite significant challenges. As such, children continue to write to the residents and are once again visiting the home to sing to the residents and celebrate birthdays with them. There is a display in school which shares questions and answers between the younger children and the residents of the care home. Children and parents deeply value this community link and they see the value this brings to their education.

The Arts are a very important part of school life. The school puts on a show each year and welcomes parents, even providing a free ticket to ensure cost is no barrier for attendance. Children really value this opportunity. The most recent production of *The Lion King Jnr* was discussed with great excitement by the children and they were equally excited by the upcoming production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dream Coat*. These shows are made even more special by the fact that teachers and support staff give up their time freely to ensure that no curriculum time is lost for rehearsals. Instead, children stay late to practice and put on their spectacular performances.

During the visit, the 'Wear it Pink' coffee morning was held. There was a very strong turn out from parents who were keen to support the school. This event is deeply personal to the Leadership of the school and this can be felt by how staff, children and parents pulled together to support the event. The coffee morning was a real highlight of the assessment visit. Parents were very passionate about West Rainton. They were eager to share that all staff are committed to the school and to their children. One parent said, when discussing the breadth of experiences children have, "I don't know where the teachers find the time. They work their socks off."

It is evident that the exceptional program of events for parents and for children is appreciated by everyone. Over the next year, the school intends to develop this even further and introduce an even greater number of opportunities in school (such as play leaders) and out of school (such as a mini-Lumiere festival).



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Target 2: Review the progress of our Relationship & Health Education curriculum with our families, including the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller members.

All staff at West Rainton share a passionate commitment to developing all children so they can lead happy, healthy and successful lives. They are unwavering in their commitment to provide children with a highly challenging curriculum which develops their understanding of relationships and how to stay healthy. Student work samples show how students revisit topics but gradually develop greater depth of understanding in key topics. For example, relationships are taught in each year group with gradually more complex understandings of healthy and unhealthy relationships added as children mature and the topics become more relevant to children's lives.

The development of the Relationship & Health Education (RHE) curriculum has been done with the local context in mind. The school has a higher than average proportion of children with a Traveller and Roma/Gypsy and as such, leaders are committed to engaging with them on challenging topics so that children are ready for life in 21st century Britain but their heritage is well considered. Staff do this with incredible delicacy and demonstrates the strength of their relationships with parents and carers.

RHE is also taught with a strong emphasis on reading, which is a whole school priority. There are abundant opportunities for children to read fiction and non-fiction texts to support their learning in the wider curriculum and in RHE. For example, whilst reading a class book the teacher drew out the theme "going for gold" and used this as the spring board to look at Jessie Owens and racism as well as other themes such as resilience.

Leaders are relentless in their pursuit of high-quality learning for all learners. They are constantly reviewing and improving curriculum areas. Heads of Subject are regularly given opportunities to walk their subject areas to check consistency and quality of their subjects.

Target 3: Develop knowledge and skills of staff members in regards to the wider curriculum.

Professional development for staff is a priority for leaders at West Rainton which has enabled the wider curriculum to become a very engaging program of study. The Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) lead has established an exciting new curriculum which is communication based. The Lead has crafted this program to build knowledge and skills as children progress from nursery to reception. The EYFS Lead is committed to professional development so that the children can enjoy a broad range of curriculum experiences. For example, they have recently begun a Forest School Qualification to provide the children with opportunities for outdoor learning. This is in addition to the shadowing of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO) to build capacity in that team.

There is a commitment at West Rainton to shared responsibility. Staff do not believe in passing responsibility to other staff because, as the Deputy Head explained: "we know our kids". Leaders have fostered this culture and driven it through professional



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development. All teachers are first aid trained so that they can help children in their class if they need to. Equally, all staff are trained to understand diabetes and epilepsy so they can meet the needs of children in the school regardless of whether they teach them or not.

Subject leaders are well supported by the Senior Leaders in the school. They complete regular 'walk arounds' which explore how their subject is taught at different ages and this allows for a consistent and progressive curriculum to be created.

Teachers do not leave West Rainton because they are invested in and cared for. This adds to the sense of belonging that is evident in the school. Parents value this stability as they know staff, staff know them and they regard them as more than teachers. There is a real sense of family.

Target 4: Develop a programme of provision for pupils in the lowest 20% of each class, particularly in regards to reading skills.

Reading is very high profile at West Rainton. Leaders have developed a culture of reading that is part of the whole school curriculum but also part of the expectations for home learning. All children are excited about reading. One Year 3 child talked about their ambition to "finish the library". One Year 6 boy talked about reading *The Hobbit* and how much they enjoyed this challenging text. On one classroom visit, the class was highly engrossed in their reading.

Leaders have invested in high quality areas for developing a love of reading amongst all children. The Library is the heart of the school. Children complete their intervention program, *Read, Write, Inc* in the library and they value this space as it is treated with respect. In addition, children can access the 'reading lodge' which is an exciting space outside where children can gather to read alone or with adults. Children talked passionately about the support they receive to read well. They discussed the frequency in which teachers, support staff and leaders invite them to come and read with them and some children give up their 'golden time' to read as they enjoy it so much.

The interventions and provision for developing reading skills at West Rainton are highly effective. All learners, regardless of their starting points, make significant progress in reading because interventions are purposeful, staff are highly trained to deliver them and because the curriculum is meticulously planned to provide ample opportunities for all learners to develop skills and knowledge. Leaders at West Rainton Primary School are not complacent. They have expressed the desire to accelerate the progress of these students in wider curriculum areas as well as maths. The Deputy Head tracks and analyses this data forensically to ensure that no child is left behind.



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Agreed Targets for 2022-2023

Target 1: Develop new events for the wider community to attend in school, e.g. mini Lumiere, and for our pupils to get involved in or attend, e.g. ice hockey games.

- New events to widen the offer at West Rainton Primary School.

Target 2: Look at ways in which we can share our established good practice with other schools.

- Offer training on the practice that we are proud of to other schools: this will be part of our work on widening the curriculum offer, and showing other schools what we do to engage less reluctant participants, and reticent parents.

Target 3: Look at ways in which we can continue to develop the reading skills of the lowest 20%, as well as look at ways in which to enhance the other skills of these pupils.

- Continue to support lowest 20% of readers, and evaluate the progress of these pupils.
- Look at provision in writing and maths, in line with support from academic mentor, to exploit further opportunities to support these pupils.

The Impact of the Cluster Group

West Rainton Primary School plays an active part in the IQM cluster group. It is expert in engaging reluctant parents and hard to reach groups. As such, it has engaged proactively with other schools to share this expertise. The Deputy Head teacher has further plans to expand this impact within the Cluster Group. During the academic year 21/22, West Rainton shared its approach to enrichment and evaluation of the wider curriculum. This promoted a professional discussion with other centres for excellence on their approach and how it could be strengthened. Furthermore, the school has benefited from the expertise of other centres when looking at English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision.

Leaders at West Rainton Primary School value the impact of the Cluster Group and play an active part. They are keen to expand their impact beyond the Cluster Group and are engaging in active discussions with Durham Local Authority to further share their expertise and experiences so they can support other schools.



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Overview

West Rainton is a very special place. The Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher are a fierce team who passionately believe in the potential of every child and every stakeholder in the school. Teachers are unwavering in their commitment to children. One parent remarked "I don't know where the teachers find the time. They work their socks off". This is because staff give their time to children and families without reservation. This means children can access an exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities that broaden their horizons and develop them as citizens.

Situated in the former pit village of West Rainton, the primary school serves a disadvantaged community. The number of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) is around 50% which is well above average. There is an above average number of children from a Traveller and Roma/Gypsy (GRT) background. The school is a smaller than average primary school but is immensely popular. Staff and student mobility are extremely low. Staff do not tend to leave West Rainton Primary School, the Head Teacher has only ever worked at the school and lives in the village.

There is an overwhelming sense of belonging at West Rainton Primary School. Parents were open and honest about their experiences of feeling they are part of the school because teachers make them feel welcome and included. Every parent described West Rainton Primary School as more than a school, it is a family. This permeates every part of school life. The parents of the most marginalised, those from disadvantaged communities, those with Special Educational Needs and those from the Traveller and Gypsy/Roma communities, talk passionately about their feelings of being included at West Rainton Primary School. There is a commitment from everyone in the school community to ensure everyone belongs. Parents feel that the school is the heart of the village because it welcomes everyone and no one really leaves, all parents talk about how their children who have left for secondary school still stop by to discuss their progress with their old teachers.

The extra-curricular program is tailored to children's interests. Parents are very complimentary of the dedication of staff to providing their children with a broad range of experiences from London trips to steel drumming. The Deputy Head passionately believes that all children should be able to access these experiences and as such removes barriers without hesitation. For example, gymnastics was so popular with the children that she brought in a teacher to allow more sessions to be put on. Equally, a child with additional needs was given a 1:1 worker to support them in accessing this extra curriculum opportunity.

The Head and Deputy Head are a formidable team who work together to transform the lives of children in their care. They are relentless in removing barriers for every child and every family. One parent talked about their experience of their child being "written off" but was visited by the Head and Deputy Head, admitted to the school and is now thriving academically and socially. The Deputy Head said "this is what we do".

Children are a credit to the school. They talk with great excitement and enthusiasm for the curriculum and the opportunities they are given. In Year 6, they had finished reading *Wonder* and pupils talked very maturely about the themes of the book and how



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important it is to treat others how you would like to be treated. They made very eloquent arguments about the importance of protected characteristics and “including everyone”. This is because belonging is a fundamental part of school life. It runs through the curriculum, every conversation with children and every interaction with adults. Children support each other to be successful. Corridors are calm and orderly because children know how to regulate their behaviour and why it is important to be safe.

Lunch time further reflects the level of respect children have for others. Children play appropriately and with care. They have a wide range of activities to do at lunch time because leaders have invested in enriching play equipment. Children know the rules and help each other to stick to them. The lunch supervisors model the same sense of belonging as teachers and other support staff, they are highly supportive of the children and the children know they can go to them for help, if they need to.

Children access a very high quality and challenging curriculum which is underpinned by a commitment to including every child. Reading is high profile in the school and the library has been redesigned to include a broad range of authors, genres and themes. Leaders have created a highly challenging and diverse canon of literature that children will read over their time at West Rainton. For example, children read books from authors who are refugees and those with Lesbian, Gay, Bixsexual and Transgender (LGBT+) themes so that children are able to appreciate the richness of human experience.

Governors play a very important part in the life of West Rainton. The Chair of Governors provides challenge to leaders through regular drop ins. The children are familiar with governors and meet with them often to discuss the curriculum and their learning. The Chair of Governors brings significant experience and attends performances and assemblies so that families are aware of their role. The Chair regards West Rainton as functioning “like a family”.

Central to this family feel is the importance of staff well-being. The EYFS lead has recently undertaken additional training in Forest School learning which includes mindfulness and yoga. There are already plans in place to provide this for children, parents and staff. The Deputy Head talked about the culture of staff supporting each other so that everyone chips in. The staff room includes a prominent display advising “you can't pour from an empty cup” and different avenues of support.

The IQM Cluster Group has supported the school to develop inclusive practice. The Deputy Head Teacher is highly knowledgeable and led aspects of the cluster this year. This provision is now expanding even further by supporting the Local Authority with their approach to reaching hard to reach parents and carers. The Deputy Head has significant experience of this and will bring this to the LA to support even more schools beyond the cluster.

It was a privilege to meet the staff who are so dedicated to the children of West Rainton and the parents who support the school unwaveringly because leaders have built trust and respect over many years. The children of West Rainton are an asset. They are very special and made my visit so wonderful. The Deputy Head is immensely passionate



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about the children and the school and she forms a key part, along with the Head Teacher, who have led to the success of West Rainton Primary School.

Thank you to everyone who made my visit so special.

West Rainton Primary School is an exceptional place and I wholeheartedly recommend that West Rainton Primary School retains its Centre of Excellence Award. The new targets for 22/23 will further strengthen the school.

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 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: Craig Wright

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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