



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School: Calthorpe Academy
Darwin Street
Highgate
Birmingham
B12 0TP

Head/Principal: Mounir Meghalsi

IQM Lead: Laura Marsden

Date of Review: 23rd June 2022

Assessor: Tayce Mason

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group: Midlands Inclusion Network

Ambassador; Jane Flynn

Date of Next Meeting: 5th July

Next Cluster Group Meeting Focus: SEND provision, DLP project

Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day:

Discussions with:

- SENCo
- Assistant Heads
- Vocational Inclusion manager/Transition Lead
- Skills for life Mentor/Coach
- Head teacher
- Deputy Head (Curriculum Lead)
- Student representatives (Post 16)
- Transition Team Lead – BCC LA
- Employer representatives from work experience placements, including Team manager at Tesco, Admin manager at Birmingham Children's Hospital (Liver Unit)
- Representative from governing body
- Class teachers during tour of school

Additional Activities:

- Tour of the school, including Post 16 Learning Centre, Belgrave Site (EYFS and KS1)
- Student placement logs



Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The school's targets are based upon further enhancing the career provision for learners from Year 9 onwards, with the intention of removing barriers and increasing opportunities for learners to achieve their maximum potential in an appropriate provision and to aid the learner and their parents through the transition. The outline of the project addressed the following aims:

Project Aim 1.1 – *Develop enhanced partnership links with transition providers from Year 9 onwards*

Project Aim 1.2 – *Providing learners with exposure of Post 16 and 19 settings*

Project Aim 1.3 – *Provide greater support of the local offer to parents*

From the very start of my visit to Calthorpe Academy, it was clear to see the passion that all the staff have for ensuring the learners in their school have the best possible opportunities. Starting from the Early Years and continuing throughout the academy, culminating in the opportunities provided for learners through post 16 and 19 work placements. They work tirelessly to promote the skills of their learners, breaking down barriers and misconceptions and celebrating the individual.

The journey of post 16 transition at Calthorpe Academy started approximately 10 years ago with the SENCo and the Vocational Inclusion Manager. They had begun to look at the pathways that their leavers took when they reached 16, they found at the time there was significantly fewer, if any opportunities for their learners, and that parents often faced the daunting task of leaving Calthorpe Academy and having to fight their way through the jungle of post 16 opportunities and provision. The SENCo and Inclusion Manager began speaking to employers to see if there were any opportunities for their learners to access work placements and what the barriers to this would be. Laughing, they described the way they had to be relentlessly challenging, finding a solution for every barrier that was put in their way.

Their Flagship project is a consolidation of all the work they have been developing since then, with planned next steps to enhance post Year 9 provision further. The journey of the learner starts from day one at Calthorpe Academy, with assessments carried out to ensure that the EHCP targets are accurate and a true reflection of the learner's needs and abilities. Calthorpe Academy pride themselves on the fact that although they have the largest number of vulnerable learners in the local authority, 6% of their learners are able to access further education, with 12% accessing work placement, compared to the national average of 5.8%.

The over-arching aim of the project is to ensure that post Year 9 learners are able to access appropriate pathways towards post 16 and 19 provision. For some learners, the pathway will involve access to appropriate medical and health services, with access to day care centres and provisions to support their independence skills and daily living. The SENCo, Inclusion Lead and Vocational Inclusion Manager (Inclusion Team) have worked alongside local day care centres, training their staff to understand the needs of the learners, demonstrating how tweaks to provision can ensure that the outcomes and



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



provisions within the EHCP can be met. They have also worked alongside other external professionals, including social workers, delivering training and awareness to enable them to understand the needs and provide appropriate support to the learners.

For other learners, a Career Action Plan is developed, outlining college and work placements with the aim of supporting the development of functional skills, such as ICT, communication and social interaction and developing self-confidence. The Inclusion Team has worked with local colleges and work providers to ensure that learners are able to access further education opportunities and work placements, through a process of changing attitudes, planning for needs and adapting environments. This includes each learner having a wellbeing passport, outlining any sensory, communication, medical and behavioural needs the learner may have. The Inclusion Team then work with the placement to manage changes and adaptations. During work placements, learners are accompanied by Skills for Life Coaches (work buddies), they work alongside ensuring employers receive training and support around appropriate adaptations that may need to be made and that any concerns or barriers are discussed and solutions are found. The school has achieved the Careers Award in recognition of the work they do around ensuring the pathways of their learners are aspirational and realistic.

To support the choices and pathways of the learner, staff monitor and observe, identifying the interests and abilities of the learners. This knowledge then helps the staff to plan and support the learner to make informed choices about what they would like to do. The school also recognises that the parents are key to the decision-making process and therefore provide opportunities for them to meet with key staff both in school and external providers, such as from colleges, work placements or the local authority, breaking down the barriers and developing positive relationships. The inclusion Team have developed comprehensive information around what is available, this is easily available on the website and demonstrates the opportunities available.

During my visit, I had the pleasure to meet three of the post 19 learners, alongside their Skills for Life Coach. They proudly wore their Tesco uniforms and although they were due to go to work, they were able to spend some time talking about their jobs. One learner had arrived in England approximately 4 years ago, he had profound hearing loss and a diagnosis of autism. When he started at Calthorpe Academy, he was taught how to sign and was able to begin to communicate, something he had not previously been able to do. He also began to understand social etiquettes, this had enabled him to start to achieve and succeed. He had become a student ambassador, secured a place within college and had 2 part time work placements. He described the roles and responsibilities he had, including stacking shelves, sorting stock to ensure older stock was at the front and picking items within the Tesco.com store. He also volunteered at the Children's Hospital where he would help with the serving of food and photocopying in the admin department. When asked how he felt, he beamed and signed that he was happy. The other learners also worked at Tesco with similar responsibilities, the staff were eager to explain that for one of the learners, his work placement had developed his confidence around unfamiliar adults and that although still quite shy at times, he was now able to help customers on the shop floor. The third learner in the group, talked about his roles and responsibilities in both Tesco and the Children's Hospital, with encouragement he told me how he was particularly good at inputting data and had been able to spot a number of clerical errors and highlight these to the office manager. After



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



leaving to go to their placement, the staff told me that this learner had been with them since he was in the primary phase and that he had struggled with communication and behaviour at this point and the change in him was just amazing.

They were eager to show me two of the videos they had made with some of the other learners about their placements. The learners had written the interview questions, discussing the benefits of work experience to the learner, they also asked about the concerns some of the employers had prior to starting the placements and their misconceptions about the learners. They had also written and performed the music played during the video.

These were just some examples of the opportunities available for post 16 learners. Prior to my visit, I had looked at the website and was struck by the Case Studies available. These had been written by some of the external providers that the school worked with, including Willmott Dixon, BCWH partnership and Tesco, each case study outlined, not only the provision offered and outcomes for the learner, but also the positive impact on the workplace.

I was delighted to meet the LA Transition Lead and some representatives from the work placements. They had felt it important to attend so that they could share their experiences. They shared their pride in being part of a team that was making such a difference to the lives of the learners by offering work placements. All had positive stories to tell me about how they had seen the learners develop in confidence, whilst developing skills for life. The Transition Lead believed that historically schools had often left the post 16 transition pathways for the most vulnerable learners too late, she felt that the work that Calthorpe Academy was doing was hugely successful and that the multidisciplinary links were essential in sharing good practice and enabling learning to make positive steps.

The workplace employers felt that the learners were not the only ones to benefit but they also felt that their colleagues had also learnt from the experience and had gained far more understanding of how to support additional needs and make adaptations to workplace environments. They stated that some of their colleagues had even changed the days they worked to ensure they were in work on the same day as the learners from Calthorpe Academy.

During a tour of the school, I was able to visit the Learning for Life Centre, opened in 2017 and it currently supports 101 learners. The aim of the centre is to provide a learning base for post 16 students that offers a more college-like approach. There is the Orange Café, where learners can not only spend leisure time together at mealtimes but it also offers work opportunities. The outdoor area provides a safe recreational space and is also used for additional sporting and physical activities. Learners are also able to make use of the Beauty Box salon, where they can learn about personal care, including hair washing and personal hygiene. There is a games room for chill out time and other facilities including an art and craft room and horticulture centre. Some learners also have the opportunity to attend the local gym.

The staff working with the post 16 and 19 learners regularly offer support for parents through meetings and events in school looking at the transition to post 16 and 19



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



provisions. Parents are provided with information and guidance around what is available in terms of colleges, Independent Specialist Providers or work placements. The school runs a careers event, where parents are able to meet with career advisors, colleges and transition support workers from the Local Authority to look at different avenues that their child can take.

The website provides a comprehensive overview of the Careers and Aspirations that the staff have for the learners, with information regarding the careers programme, case studies, destinations, employer information, labour market information guide and other useful links.

There is a collaborative approach, parents sign a parental contract through daily books and have access to teachers email addresses. Parents are key in supporting the learners and schools through values, ethos and influence. The staff recognise that although a positive relationship is vital, at times parent's expectations may need to be challenged, including when parents have unrealistic expectations or if they are not aware of the full potential of their child. Some parents may be harder to engage, particularly when their child is brought in to school on transport, therefore school provide a range of opportunities for parents to access support, including the school APP and a blended approach of in school and teams online. Since using these systems, there has been a 55% increase in parental engagement.

Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

The schools aim for the next year of the project is to further develop and embed the post 16 and 19 provision, provided enrichment opportunities and work experiences for their learners. They actively seek out new employers, challenging misconceptions and developing partnerships, including the Football Education Programme, Birmingham City Council and the Commonwealth Games.

The school have worked hard to develop a bespoke curriculum pathway for learners recognising key areas of need and the appropriate support needed to achieve. The next stage of their Flagship project is to share their knowledge and skills with other providers, including schools within their trust, employers, colleges, day centres, other schools within the authority or beyond and social workers. They believe that their Curriculum for Life can be of benefit if shared across the city.

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Calthorpe Academy are members of the Midlands Inclusion Network Cluster Group. The Senco attended the autumn meeting at Oasis Foundry, looking at the provision they provide through their Food Bank and the use of technology within the classrooms. She found it useful to discuss and share good practice with other like-minded professionals and was able to share what she had seen with colleagues.

They were not able to attend the meeting in the spring term due to Covid. One of the Assistant Heads will be attending the next cluster group taking place on July 5th at Lea Forest Academy.



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Overview

Today I had the pleasure of visiting Calthorpe conducting a review of Year 1 of the Flagship project. From the very first moment meeting the staff, it was apparent how passionate and committed they are to ensure the learners within school are provided with every opportunity to achieve to the best of their potential, through access to appropriate pathways to meet the needs of the individual. Their role, however, extends further than just supporting the learner but also to ensuring parents are supported through the different transitional stages of their children and developing positive relationships with work placements. Calthorpe is a popular school, with 189 requests for Year 7 places, where only 8 available.

The Inclusion Manager demonstrated her passion for maximising the potential of all learners regardless of need, stating 'these learners exist in society, so what can be done?' and the belief that they should not be 'hidden away' from society. Recently there have been visits arranged, including a creative performance by ELO around the senses at the MAC, and a number of students taking part in Musical Sounds at the Town Hall, the event started with the learners joining together with other schools for a rehearsal and then an evening performance. This was attended by 19 families from the school, for some being the first time they have seen their children performing.

The Headteacher, believes that the success of the school is due to the strong network of people that make up the Calthorpe team, stating that changes are always being made within their practice to ensure that they always work with the best. All staff have a good understanding of the needs of the learner and alongside this comes a respect for the views of the parent. He lives within the community and recognises that for some of their learners, the potential for progress post 19 has been limited. He is committed to ensuring that the good work that the school does in removing the barriers continues with solution focussed models and an accountability that is both supportive yet challenging. Calthorpe Academy is part of The Beacon for Trust Schools, the CEO, previously the Head, leads the trust with an aspirational development plan that aims to provide the best opportunities for the learners and although not always at the school, ensures he is available to share the celebrations and successes. The SEF supports the Flagship project and this is shared with the governing body.

The Curriculum Lead has worked hard over the past 3 years to develop a research informed curriculum bespoke to the school, this is a 3-strand approach which supports the learner's needs and strengths, focusing on personal development. Although some learners are able to access more academic targets, the underlying ethos of the curriculum is personal development enabling the learner to access society and develop social awareness, including learning around sex education, positive relationships and managing health, all of which is entwined through all learning opportunities, ensuring repetition to embed skills and understanding. CPD is provided for all staff, including any one new to the school, ensuring that they are not only aware of the curriculum pathway but are able to advocate the benefits to their learners for themselves. Staff non-negotiables focus on ensuring that learners are ready to learn on a daily basis, this can include making sure that each learners medical needs are met, that they have eaten and had a good sleep.



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



All learners are able to take part in enrichment experiences, these start from Year 1, with children attending a residential at Dodford Farm, providing new experiences and developing independence. Other experiences include visits in school from the animal man, talks from the police, this also added to the online safety teaching, a visit from the fire service and The Welsh Orchestra.

Safeguarding is an integral part of everything they do, there is a strong DSL team that regularly meet and discuss the needs of their most vulnerable learners. The Speak Out, Stay Safe Curriculum embeds both discrete and subtle teaching, including online safety and Sex Education, ensuring their learners know how to keep safe and if necessary, how to share concerns.

The Senior Leadership Team recognise that working with some of the most complex and vulnerable children can be a challenging job, they regularly look at the work load and try to develop smart working, reflecting on working practices, discussing what is actually necessary to ensure there is a positivity around work/life balance. There is a high focus supporting staff wellbeing, with a 'Day with the Family' built in to the calendar. Staff have access to SAS an online platform, where they can seek support for a range of wellbeing needs, including medical and physical support, holistic approaches and menopause support for both women and men.

All staff have opportunities for CPD through external courses and training or work-based learning opportunities. The Inclusion Team were keen to point out that all staff sought to provide the best for their learners. For example, the catering manager had undertaken his own training around inclusion to enable a better understanding of the needs of the learners when using the canteen and provided work placements within his catering team.

The journey and preparation for adulthood starts from the very first day for children at Calthorpe Academy. When starting school, children are baselined to ensure that all needs, including physical, medical and communication needs are accurately assessed. There is a graduated approach that is demonstrated in classrooms throughout the school. Some of the youngest children are taught on the Belgrave site, recently opened to support autistic learners in the EYFS and KS1. The teachers plan activities around continuous provision that supports the learner's holistic needs, with the aim to develop both independence and individuality. This can be seen through the choices available for children to make regarding activities available throughout the day to the use of visual support on timetables. Younger children have visuals relevant to their understanding and needs, whereas older learners have more specific visuals relating to subject areas and particular interests.

This was my first visit to Calthorpe Academy and it has certainly left a positive impression on me. The offer at Calthorpe Academy seems to have an individualised approach with not only the child at the centre of everything they do but also the wider community and the never-ending determination to break down barriers for their learners to ensure they achieve their maximum potential. This report, although lengthy only starts to describe the work that the staff do and I could have included so much more. The staff I had the pleasure of talking to today, describe themselves as a team and are passionate about their commitment and persistence. During a conversation with the



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Transition Lead from the LA, she stated that the staff did not realise the true extent of the work they do and I agree with her sentiments. I have no reservations whatsoever in recommending that Calthorpe continue to retain their Flagship status. I look forward to the possibility of visiting again next year and seeing how far their journey has taken them.

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: Tayce Mason

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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