



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



School Name St Michael's Catholic Primary School
Guion Street
Liverpool
L6 9DU

Head/Principal Mrs Jade Gordon

IQM Lead Mrs Sarah Reilly

Date of Review 23rd June 2026

Assessor Mr David Clay

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group Inclusion NW

Ambassador Mrs Sarah Linari

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2025	9 th October 2025	Yes
Spring 2026	19 th March 2026	No
Summer 2026	8 th June 2026	Yes



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The Impact of the Cluster Group (with details of the impact of last three meetings)

Since becoming an IQM Centre of Excellence, St Michael's has continued to engage positively with the IQM Cluster, attending two of the three meetings held during the review period. Members of the SEND leadership team attended both the autumn and summer meetings, ensuring that learning from the cluster continues to inform the school's ongoing commitment to inclusive practice. Unfortunately, the school was unable to attend the spring meeting due to a late change of date; however, leaders have remained committed to maintaining links with colleagues across the network.

The autumn cluster meeting, hosted by Castleway Primary School, provided a valuable opportunity for a newer member of the SEND leadership team to reflect upon St Michael's own inclusive practice alongside that of other Centre of Excellence schools. Leaders commented that it was reassuring to see that many of the approaches already embedded at St Michael's reflected current best practice in SEND and inclusion. Professional dialogue around curriculum representation prompted further reflection on how the school ensures that its reading spine reflects the rich diversity of its own community whilst remaining ambitious and inclusive. The visit also provided an opportunity to observe Forest School practice first-hand and consider its impact on pupil engagement, wellbeing, and academic development. This learning has informed the school's future plans as it develops its own Forest School provision to further enhance opportunities for all pupils, including those with the most complex needs.

The summer North West Collaborative meeting, hosted at Edge Hill University, enabled leaders to revisit evidence-informed approaches, including Philosophy for Children. As St Michael's continues to develop its work around oracy and communication, leaders recognised the potential of these approaches to further strengthen pupils' confidence in expressing their ideas, developing critical thinking, and ensuring that every child's voice is heard within the classroom.

Beyond the formal cluster meetings, St Michael's continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to collaborative working. Through local school partnerships and consortium working, staff have worked closely with colleagues from neighbouring schools to share expertise and provide support, particularly in relation to SEND and inclusive practice. This outward-facing approach reflects the school's willingness not only to learn from others but also to contribute its own considerable expertise to the wider educational community.



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Evidence

- Tour of School
- OFSTED Report
- School website
- IQM Action Plan
- Lesson Drop Ins
- Speech and Language Intervention Drop In
- Socially Speaking Intervention Drop In
- EAL Intervention Drop In
- Book Look
- Lunch Time Drop In
- Visit to New Forest School Space

Meetings held with:

- IQM Lead and Headteacher
- Staff Representatives
- Meeting with Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Leadership Team
- Governors
- Senior Management Team
- Students (Y1-Y6)
- Parents

Evaluation of Targets for last 12 Months

Target 1: To re-establish and embed a dedicated staff wellbeing team that actively informs school policy and practice, ensuring all decisions positively impact staff morale, workload, and wellbeing.

The school has successfully re-established and embedded a dedicated Staff Wellbeing Team, ensuring that staff wellbeing is considered strategically rather than through isolated or tokenistic initiatives. Leaders have remained committed to maintaining high expectations for both staff and pupils, whilst recognising that a supported and valued workforce is fundamental to delivering the best outcomes for children. Throughout the review, staff consistently spoke of a culture where children remain at the heart of every decision, with one member of staff commenting, "We do everything for the children and that is the heart of it." This shared moral purpose was evident across all discussions. The Staff Wellbeing Team has provided colleagues with meaningful opportunities to contribute to whole-school decision making and to raise concerns in an open and supportive environment. Staff described feeling genuinely listened to and valued, reporting that they are given opportunities to voice concerns and that changes introduced by leaders are carefully considered and implemented with staff wellbeing in mind. Workload reduction has remained a clear priority, with staff highlighting the significant reduction in marking expectations as one example of how leaders have thoughtfully reviewed systems without compromising standards.

An additional factor contributing significantly to staff wellbeing has been the continued improvement in pupil behaviour. Staff spoke positively about the calm learning environment that has been developed and recognised the relentless work undertaken by leaders and the team supporting pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. As behaviour has improved, staff described feeling better able to focus on teaching and learning, further enhancing both morale and job satisfaction. One Early Career Teacher described the school as "a happy and safe place where staff, as well as children, are looked after," reflecting the nurturing culture that has been established.

The school has also recognised the importance of strengthening relationships within the staff team beyond the classroom. Planned opportunities for colleagues to spend time together socially have helped to further develop trust and cohesion. Staff spoke particularly positively about a Christmas event where they decorated candles together, with one colleague commenting that it was valuable to have "time and space to just be together and talk about things unrelated to work." These opportunities have helped to further strengthen the collegiate culture that exists across the school.

Importantly, the wellbeing of senior leaders is also recognised as a priority. Governors demonstrated a clear understanding of their role in both supporting and challenging school leaders. The Chair of Governors spoke thoughtfully about the importance of providing personal as well as professional support, recognising that effective leadership is sustained when leaders themselves feel valued, supported and able to maintain a healthy work-life balance, particularly at a time when the leadership team is at a reduced capacity due to maternity leave. This whole-school commitment to wellbeing, extending from governors through to pupils, has further strengthened the school's inclusive culture and provides a secure foundation for continued improvement. This has

also led to the introduction of a SEND leadership team this year, giving greater capacity for this team to support throughout the school, given the high level of need there is within the school.

Next Steps:

- Continue to provide meaningful opportunities for staff to influence whole-school decision making through the Staff Wellbeing Team, ensuring that workload, wellbeing, and professional voice remain central to the school's collaborative and inclusive culture.
- Continue to strengthen staff wellbeing by planning opportunities for colleagues to come together socially, further nurturing positive relationships, a strong sense of community and the supportive ethos that underpins the school's inclusive practice.

Target 2: Continue to refine and streamline the curriculum to ensure it is coherently designed, inclusive, and fully aligned with the diverse needs of St. Michael's learners, empowering every student to achieve and flourish.

The school has continued to refine its curriculum through a clearly articulated pedagogical vision that underpins teaching and learning across the school. Leaders have ensured that curriculum development remains firmly rooted in high expectations whilst recognising the importance of meeting the diverse needs of every learner. This shared understanding of effective teaching has influenced curriculum design throughout the school, providing consistency while allowing the flexibility needed to respond to individual pupils. Leaders are now thoughtfully exploring further opportunities to provide staff with dedicated time to address gaps in learning and deepen pupils' understanding, ensuring that curriculum refinement remains responsive to the needs of St Michael's learners. The headteacher and leadership team have a clear vision for the St Michael's Curriculum and how to support its learners.

Central to this work is a culture that empowers teachers to make informed professional decisions within the school's agreed pedagogical framework. Staff spoke positively about the trust placed in them to adapt learning to meet the needs of their pupils, ensuring that inclusive practice is embedded within everyday classroom teaching rather than viewed as an additional strategy. This philosophy was clearly articulated during the learning walk, where the Deputy Headteacher reflected on the school's approach to the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems in Reception, stating, "If we get it right for our most complex needs, we are going to get it right for everyone." This commitment to designing learning from the perspective of the most vulnerable learners was evident throughout the school, with carefully considered scaffolds, adaptations and inclusive classroom practice ensuring that all pupils are able to access the curriculum successfully.

The leadership team's vision is firmly rooted in research-informed practice and a commitment to continual improvement. Staff have been well supported to develop high-quality classroom practice through a coaching model based on WalkThrus. Staff spoke enthusiastically about this approach, describing it as a process where they "don't feel judged" and where professional dialogue takes place within a "safe space." This

collaborative coaching culture has fostered reflective practitioners who are confident to refine and adapt their teaching whilst maintaining consistently high expectations. The school also demonstrates an impressive commitment to what leaders described as a granular approach to teaching and learning. Staff are supported to develop a detailed understanding of the component skills that underpin successful learning, enabling them to identify barriers quickly and respond with precision. This was particularly evident in the school's highly effective handwriting assessment and intervention documentation, which has been carefully designed to identify both the physical and cognitive processing factors that may influence handwriting development. This detailed understanding enables staff to provide highly targeted support and exemplifies the school's commitment to early identification and responsive teaching.

During the past year, this approach to adaptation has been embedded more consistently across the curriculum. Subject leaders have played a significant role in sharing effective practice, ensuring that subject-specific adaptations are understood and implemented by staff. Strategies that were already well established within foundation subjects have been successfully extended across the wider curriculum. During the review, adapted learning materials demonstrated the consistent use of dual coding, carefully scaffolded resources, and Widgit symbols to support understanding and independence. These adaptations were not viewed as additional interventions but as integral features of high-quality classroom practice, ensuring that the curriculum remains ambitious, accessible, and inclusive for every learner.

The school's commitment to professional trust, evidence-informed pedagogy and continual curriculum refinement has further strengthened inclusive practice across the school. Staff are well equipped to adapt learning appropriately whilst maintaining a coherent curriculum that enables every pupil to participate, achieve and flourish.

Next Steps:

- Continue to embed subject-specific adaptive teaching strategies across the curriculum, ensuring that high-quality scaffolding, dual coding, and communication supports are consistently evident in every classroom.
- Further develop staff confidence in the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) approaches and communication-friendly practice, ensuring that the principle of designing learning for the most complex learners continues to strengthen inclusive provision for all pupils.

Target 3: Embed the use of Flash Academy across the curriculum, ensuring consistent implementation and rigorous monitoring of its impact on pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL), with a focus on accelerating language acquisition and promoting confident, independent learners.

In response to the large number of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL), the school has introduced Flash Academy as part of its wider commitment to ensuring that all pupils are able to access the curriculum and develop confidence as learners. A comprehensive baseline assessment of English language proficiency has been completed for pupils with EAL, providing staff with a clear understanding of pupils' starting points and enabling targeted support to be carefully planned.

During the review, younger pupils were observed engaging enthusiastically with Flash Academy during intervention sessions, demonstrating high levels of motivation and independence. Older pupils also spoke positively about their experiences of using the programme, explaining that it had helped them to "get better at English" and had supported both their confidence and sense of belonging within the school community. This reflects the school's understanding that language acquisition is not solely about academic success but is fundamental to inclusion, participation and developing positive relationships.

Importantly, the school has demonstrated a reflective and evidence-informed approach to implementation. Rather than accepting the programme uncritically, leaders carefully evaluated its effectiveness and identified aspects that were less successful for their particular context, particularly for younger learners. This willingness to evaluate practice critically exemplifies the school's commitment to continuous improvement. Leaders have subsequently worked collaboratively with the developers of Flash Academy to help shape a pilot programme that incorporates adaptations based on the school's feedback and experience. This partnership demonstrates a determination to ensure that the programme genuinely meets the needs of St Michael's pupils rather than expecting pupils to adapt to the programme itself.

Next Steps:

- Continue to embed the adapted Flash Academy programme with younger pupils, ensuring that the refinements developed through the pilot are implemented consistently to provide a high-quality language learning experience both in school and at home.
- Strengthen parental engagement by providing workshops and guidance that support families in accessing Flash Academy effectively at home, enabling parents to play an active role in their child's language development whilst maximising opportunities for targeted support within the school day.
- Continue to monitor the impact of Flash Academy through pupil progress, pupil voice, and staff evaluation, ensuring that the programme remains responsive to the evolving needs of pupils with English as an Additional Language.

Target 4: Strengthen and extend adaptive strategies to meet the needs of an increasingly complex cohort of learners, by developing and implementing bespoke, non-subject-specific curriculum pathways that ensure meaningful progression for pupils working significantly below age-related expectations.

St Michael's continues to demonstrate considerable expertise in supporting pupils with complex learning needs through highly personalised approaches that enable every child to experience success. From Nursery through to Year 6, the school has developed a strong reputation for ensuring that pupils working significantly below age-related expectations are fully included within the life of the school whilst accessing learning through carefully adapted and ambitious pathways.

Throughout the learning walk, this commitment to inclusive practice was evident across all key stages. Pupils were sensitively supported by knowledgeable adults who demonstrated a secure understanding of individual learning needs. Importantly, these

personalised approaches remain firmly led by class teachers, ensuring that pupils accessing adapted pathways continue to be recognised as integral members of their class community rather than following a separate curriculum delivered in isolation. Recognising the increasing complexity of need within the school, leaders have invested significant time in developing staff understanding of pre-formal and semi-formal learning pathways. As an initial step, the school has introduced the Cherry Garden Branch Maps to provide staff with a shared framework for understanding developmental progression. Leaders reported that this has increased staff confidence and provided greater clarity about individual learning priorities, ensuring that teaching is informed by pupils' developmental stage rather than chronological age alone.

Importantly, leaders are clear that the introduction of the Cherry Garden Branch Maps is not viewed as a final product but as the foundation upon which a bespoke curriculum for St Michael's pupils can continue to evolve. Demonstrating the reflective and research-informed approach characteristic of the school, staff are now working collaboratively with a local specialist setting through the Princes Project to refine and adapt these pathways so that they accurately reflect the needs, strengths, and aspirations of pupils within their own context.

Many examples of highly effective practice were observed during the review which will further inform the continued development of curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment for these learners. Leaders are also exploring how Forest School can further enhance provision, recognising the significant opportunities that outdoor learning provides for developing communication, independence, regulation, physical development, and wider personal outcomes. This reflects the school's ambition to provide meaningful learning experiences that extend beyond traditional academic measures whilst maintaining high aspirations for every pupil.

Next Steps:

- Continue to work collaboratively through the Princes Project to refine and develop the school's pre-formal and semi-formal curriculum, ensuring that learning pathways are ambitious, coherent, and closely matched to pupils' developmental needs.
- Further develop the school's planned semi-formal hub, ensuring that curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment work seamlessly together to provide personalised learning experiences whilst maintaining pupils' sense of belonging within the wider school community.
- Continue to explore and embed the use of Forest School as an integral element of the semi-formal curriculum, enhancing opportunities for pupils to develop communication, independence, emotional regulation, and personal development through meaningful, real-life learning experiences.



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Target 5: To further develop pupils' understanding of their rights as outlined in the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to explicitly link these to the fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

The school has continued to strengthen pupils' understanding of their rights through a well-planned programme of weekly Picture News assemblies, providing regular opportunities to explore current affairs alongside the principles of the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Fundamental British Values. These sessions have encouraged pupils to think critically about the world around them whilst developing their understanding of fairness, equality, respect and belonging within an inclusive society. During discussions, pupils spoke positively about these assemblies and demonstrated a secure understanding of both their rights and the values that underpin life within modern Britain. In particular, many pupils referred to their right to have their views listened to and respected, reflecting the school's commitment to ensuring that pupil voice is valued throughout school life. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the opportunities they are given to express their opinions and recognised that adults take their views seriously, reinforcing a culture where children feel heard, respected, and empowered.

This work is further strengthened through the school's bespoke Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum, including the thoughtful use of *No Outsiders*. Leaders have ensured that themes of inclusion, diversity and equality are carefully woven throughout the curriculum, with pupils seeing themselves, their families and the wider community positively represented within core texts and learning experiences. This coherent approach enables pupils to develop an appreciation of difference whilst promoting mutual respect, empathy, and acceptance.

Next Step:

Continue to embed the principles of the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child more explicitly within everyday classroom practice, enabling pupils to make meaningful connections between their rights, their learning, and their responsibilities as members of an inclusive school community.

Agreed Targets for next twelve Months.

Target 1: To further strengthen staff engagement with international partnerships by embedding global themes and perspectives into curriculum planning and professional development, ensuring pupils develop as globally aware and responsible citizens.

Comments: St Michael's is a school that genuinely celebrates the rich diversity of its community and views this as one of its greatest strengths. Throughout the review, it was evident that pupils, families, and staff value the wide range of cultures represented within the school and actively seek opportunities to learn from one another. This commitment to inclusion is reflected in events such as the highly successful *'Picnic from Around the World'*, where families share food and traditions from the many countries represented within the school community. Staff and governors spoke warmly about the event, with one member of staff joking that everyone should experience the jollof rice. Such events go beyond celebrating diversity; they foster belonging, strengthen relationships with families, and encourage pupils to develop genuine curiosity and respect for different cultures.

Building upon this strong foundation, the school has begun to establish international partnerships through its involvement with the Global School Alliance. Links have already been established with four schools, providing exciting opportunities for pupils and staff to engage with global perspectives and develop meaningful international relationships. Over the coming year, leaders intend to strengthen these partnerships further, particularly by developing links with schools that reflect the cultural heritage of families within the St Michael's community. This will provide authentic opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of different cultures, recognise shared experiences, and celebrate diversity through reciprocal learning.

As an IQM Centre of Excellence, St Michael's is also well placed to share this aspect of its inclusive practice more widely. The rich cultural diversity within the school community presents valuable opportunities to work collaboratively with other schools across the IQM network, particularly those with less culturally diverse populations. Exploring initiatives such as pen-pal projects, collaborative learning opportunities, shared celebrations, and joint visits would enable pupils from different communities to learn with and from one another, further promoting inclusion, belonging and global citizenship across the wider IQM family. This target has the potential not only to enrich the experiences of pupils at St Michael's but also to strengthen the school's contribution to inclusive practice beyond its own community through meaningful collaboration and the sharing of expertise.

Target 2: To further strengthen and extend adaptive strategies to meet the needs of an increasingly complex cohort of learners, by developing and implementing bespoke, non-subject-specific curriculum pathways that ensure meaningful progression for pupils working significantly below age-related expectations.

Comments: St Michael's has established a strong reputation for ensuring that pupils with the most complex learning needs receive highly personalised support within an inclusive school community. Building upon this well-established practice, the school will continue to develop bespoke curriculum pathways for pupils working within pre-formal and semi-formal stages of learning, ensuring that every pupil has access to ambitious learning experiences that are closely matched to their developmental needs.

Over the coming year, a key priority will be to further refine the school's semi-formal curriculum through its ongoing work within the Princes Project and collaboration with specialist colleagues. Leaders will continue to develop curriculum pathways that clearly identify meaningful learning outcomes whilst ensuring that teaching, assessment, and the learning environment work together to provide coherent and purposeful learning experiences. This work will enable staff to build upon the foundations already established through the Cherry Garden Branch Maps and create a curriculum that reflects the unique strengths and needs of St Michael's pupils.

Alongside curriculum development, the school will continue to strengthen staff expertise in delivering highly personalised learning and teaching through the engagement model. Through collaborative enquiry, professional development and shared practice, staff will further refine approaches that support communication, engagement, regulation, and independence, ensuring that pupils experience consistent, high-quality provision throughout their school journey.

A central ambition of this work is to enable pupils to become as independent as possible. Curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment will therefore continue to focus not only on developmental progress but also on equipping pupils with the communication, functional, social and life skills that will allow them to participate confidently within school and beyond. The planned development of a dedicated semi-formal hub provides an exciting opportunity to further strengthen this provision. By creating an environment specifically designed to meet the needs of these learners, whilst maintaining pupils' belonging within the wider school community, St Michael's is well placed to develop an exemplary model of inclusive practice that reflects its ambition for every child to thrive.

Target 3: Continue to refine and streamline the curriculum to ensure it is coherently designed, inclusive, and fully aligned with the diverse needs of St. Michael's learners, empowering every student to achieve and flourish.

Comments: St Michael's has established a coherent, research-informed curriculum that is underpinned by a shared pedagogical approach and consistently high expectations for all learners. Over the coming year, the school will continue to refine this curriculum, ensuring that it remains ambitious whilst providing the flexibility needed to respond to the increasingly diverse needs of its pupils. Leaders will continue to review curriculum



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content and sequencing so that staff have the time and confidence to address gaps in learning, deepen understanding and maximise opportunities for every pupil to succeed. Building on the strong adaptive practice already evident throughout the school, a key priority will be to further embed high-quality adaptive teaching strategies across all curriculum areas. Subject leaders will continue to support colleagues in developing and sharing subject-specific adaptations, ensuring that effective approaches, including scaffolding, dual coding, communication-friendly resources and the use of Widgit symbols, become consistently embedded throughout the curriculum. This work will further strengthen pupils' access to learning whilst maintaining high expectations and promoting increasing independence.

The school's coaching culture will continue to play a central role in this development. Through collaborative professional dialogue and the continued use of WalkThrus, staff will be supported to reflect upon and refine their classroom practice within a culture of trust where teachers feel empowered to innovate and adapt. This commitment to evidence-informed professional development will ensure that inclusive pedagogy continues to evolve in response to the changing needs of St Michael's learners. As these approaches become increasingly embedded, the school will be well placed to further strengthen its inclusive curriculum, ensuring that every pupil, regardless of need or starting point, can access ambitious learning experiences and flourish both academically and personally.



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Overview

It was a pleasure to return to St Michael's Catholic Primary School and witness the continued development of its inclusive practice over the past year, particularly during a time of change. St Michael's remains a school where inclusion is not viewed as an initiative but as the foundation upon which every decision is made. Rooted firmly in Gospel values and driven by an unwavering belief in the potential of every child, the school continues to provide an educational experience that is ambitious, nurturing, and responsive to the needs of its richly diverse community.

The school serves a vibrant multicultural and multi-faith community in which diversity is viewed as a genuine strength. A significant proportion of pupils speak English as an Additional Language, many pupils have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, including an increasing number with highly complex needs, and a number of families are navigating challenging circumstances associated with asylum-seeking, refugee experiences and conflict within their countries of origin. Leaders demonstrate a deep understanding of the context in which the school operates and respond with compassion, creativity, and determination. Rather than viewing these challenges as barriers, the school adopts a highly solution-focused approach, ensuring that both pupils and their families receive the support they need to flourish. One particularly powerful example of this was the creation of opportunities for families affected by international conflict to come together, providing mutual support and reassurance during periods of significant uncertainty for loved ones overseas. This exemplifies the school's commitment to supporting not only the child but the whole family. It also supports the school in creating a real sense of community in Kensington with the school at its centre.

The recently appointed Headteacher has brought a clear educational vision that is firmly rooted in evidence-informed curriculum design and effective pedagogy. There is a strong sense of purpose across the school, with staff demonstrating a shared understanding of what they teach, why they teach it and how learning can be adapted to meet the needs of every pupil. Leaders continue to look ahead, constantly seeking opportunities to refine and strengthen provision rather than becoming complacent with existing success. This commitment to continual improvement is particularly evident in the school's ongoing work to develop bespoke curriculum pathways for pupils with the most complex needs, ensuring that every learner can access an ambitious curriculum that supports both academic achievement and personal development.

Throughout the review, it was evident that the learning environment is continually evolving in response to the needs of pupils. Leaders are reflective practitioners who carefully evaluate the impact of changes and are willing to adapt established approaches when this benefits children. This was particularly evident within Year 5, where therapeutic classroom principles have been thoughtfully refined. Whilst maintaining the calm, low-distraction ethos of the original approach, staff have introduced carefully considered working walls and washing lines to display key learning, recognising that these visual prompts better support pupils' independence and learning. This willingness to adapt practice in response to evidence reflects the school's pragmatic and child-centred approach to inclusion.



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The Early Years Foundation Stage is particularly impressive. Learning environments have been thoughtfully designed so that every resource has a clear purpose and contributes meaningfully to children's learning and development. The use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems throughout Reception was especially noteworthy. Rather than being viewed solely as specialist resources, AAC was seamlessly integrated into everyday teaching, supporting pupils with complex communication needs whilst simultaneously enhancing language development for all children. During a mathematics lesson, symbols were used effectively as part of dual coding strategies to reinforce key concepts for the whole class whilst also providing essential communication support for individual pupils. This philosophy of designing learning for those with the greatest need so that everyone benefits is firmly embedded within the school's practice. The success of this approach has already informed developments within Nursery, where leaders have carefully reviewed both the learning environment and available resources. Planned developments over the coming months demonstrate the school's determination to continue strengthening this highly effective provision. Despite supporting a significant number of pupils with complex needs within the Early Years, staff maintain exceptionally high expectations, with one member of staff summarising the school's ethos simply: "It's just what we do."

This commitment to inclusion continues throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Classrooms provide calm, purposeful environments where pupils clearly feel safe, valued, and ready to learn. Adaptive teaching and carefully scaffolded support enable pupils to access ambitious learning whilst promoting increasing independence. The school's team of learning mentors is a particular strength. Their specialist training enables them to provide targeted support across a wide range of needs, including social and emotional development, emotional regulation and language acquisition for pupils who speak English as an Additional Language. The recent addition of a trained Emotional Literacy Support Assistant has further strengthened the school's therapeutic offer. Staff consistently reported feeling well supported through high-quality professional development, enabling them to respond confidently to the increasingly complex needs of pupils across the school.

The school's investment in pupils' emotional wellbeing has been further enhanced through the implementation of My Happy Mind. This programme has quickly become embedded within school life, supporting pupils to understand how their brains work, develop emotional literacy, and build effective self-regulation strategies. The impact of this work extends beyond the classroom. One parent shared how their child now independently uses these strategies at home when managing their emotions, illustrating the meaningful difference the programme is making to family life.

Pupils themselves spoke enthusiastically about their learning, confidently explaining the strategies they use and describing how their classroom 'My Happy Place Corner' support their wellbeing. Older pupils also reflected positively on the transition work completed through the programme, explaining how it had helped them feel prepared and confident about moving to secondary school. Staff similarly spoke warmly about the programme, recognising both its positive impact on pupils and the professional learning they had gained through its implementation.



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Language development remains a cornerstone of provision at St Michael's. Over the past year, the school has begun to embed a stronger focus on oracy within the English curriculum, recognising the fundamental role spoken language plays in learning, confidence and belonging. Across the school, pupils were observed engaging in purposeful partner talk, making effective use of sentence stems, and developing increasingly sophisticated vocabulary. These approaches build naturally upon the school's already well-established use of communication-friendly strategies, including symbols and visual supports. As leaders continue to extend this pedagogical approach across all curriculum areas, there is significant potential to further enhance pupils' confidence, communication, and academic achievement.

The greatest strength of St Michael's is the sense of community that permeates every aspect of school life. Relationships between staff, pupils, families, and governors are warm, trusting, and authentic. Staff feel valued, listened to, and supported, and this culture of care is reflected in the way they, in turn, support the children and families within their community. There is a tangible sense that everyone belongs and that every individual matters. This inclusive ethos, coupled with the school's commitment to continual reflection, evidence-informed practice, and unwavering ambition for every learner, ensures that St Michael's Catholic Primary School remains a highly deserving IQM Centre of Excellence. The school's innovative work to further develop provision for pupils with the most complex needs, alongside its commitment to sharing and developing inclusive practice through collaborative partnerships, places it in a strong position to continue influencing inclusive education both within its local community and across the wider IQM network.

Throughout the review there was a tangible sense of optimism. Staff are reflective, ambitious, and unafraid to refine practice where this benefits pupils. Rather than viewing inclusion as a completed journey, leaders continually seek opportunities to improve provision, evaluate impact, and respond to the changing needs of their community. This culture of continual reflection is one of St Michael's greatest strengths and ensures that the school continues to evolve whilst remaining firmly rooted in its values. The school has much to contribute, particularly through its expertise in supporting pupils with English as an Additional Language, developing provision for pupils with complex SEND, and creating an inclusive curriculum that reflects the rich diversity of its community. By continuing to engage proactively with cluster meetings, sharing effective practice, and developing collaborative projects with other IQM schools, St Michael's will be well placed to demonstrate its influence across the wider network.

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: Mr David Clay

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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Joe McCann MBA NPQH

Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd