



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Overview

Horizon Community College (HCC) is an excellent inclusive, secondary school in Barnsley. The school's vision comments on the 'changes to the economic, cultural and social landscape of Barnsley,' and leaders are aware that it is their responsibility as a collective staff body, to prepare students for this reality. They believe that all students should have access to the best education provision so that they are able to realise their ambitions for their future, and their life chances are improved by embedding outstanding practice across the school. Since the last IQM review, there has been continued progress at the school, with an increased pace of change demonstrating how their values and vision for inclusion support all school developments.

HCC is a dynamic community with an exciting, purposeful learning environment. Upon entering the school reception, staff greeted me and made me feel welcome, while parents and students were welcomed similarly. I observed positive interactions between staff and students, as well as between students and the Manners Agenda has clearly been impactful.

Discussions with staff, students, and parents confirmed that the school meets the IQM award criteria. Evidence provided highlighted key aspects of the school, showcasing its positive and inclusive environment. The enthusiasm of staff was evident in meetings, both formal and informal, through their conversations about the school, colleagues, students, and their collaborative work with children and families.

Leaders know and understand the students, and this is reflected in the school's vision 'Equity of Opportunity, Strong Community, High Expectations, Global Readiness and Kindness so that our students are School ready; Work ready; Life ready'. As we visited learning areas, it was apparent that the Vice Principal knew the students well, asking questions and demonstrating a genuine interest in them as well as enquiring about their emotional health and wellbeing. It was inspiring to visit the different provisions and see all students fully engaged in learning with established routines embedded.

The Senior Leadership Team respond to the needs of students and their families. Staff engage and work with their peers, students, and their families to meet needs, frequently going beyond what is expected of them. The school collaborates with other schools and the Local Authority and has established relationships to enable them to offer quality support and intervention. In formulating the relational policy, leaders have diligently endeavoured to create a policy that aligns with the needs of their community while upholding high expectations. When contemplating reasonable adjustments, they understand the importance of implementing initiatives without compromising standards. They maintain that student responsibility and accountability are key, whilst acknowledging that there is still work to be done with some students in having accountability for their actions on others.

Recognising emotional needs is vital and leaders ensure safety by discussing trauma and asking questions instead of focusing on the behaviour. Working with parents, the school communicates understanding without condoning misconduct. In implementing the policy, leaders acknowledged that they needed to readjust the pace as some students



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were unprepared for the changes. This reinforces their commitment to reflect and self-evaluate, ensuring that students are at the centre of what they do.

The Associate Vice Principal/SENDCo attends pre-suspension discussions to ensure consideration of the entire student's situation rather than just the incident. Questions are raised about whether needs are being met, if the support is adequate, and if there is an alternative outcome for the student. The focus has shifted to asking the right questions. The school now prioritises outcomes over sanctions. Suspensions automatically initiate a pastoral support plan, reviewed bi-weekly by pastoral staff. This ensures early intervention as pastoral staff invest time to meet with students and look to analyse incidents and behaviour patterns. This process often results in significant progress for many students who benefit from the early support and intervention.

Staff prioritise relationships with students, greeting them each morning and ensuring visibility throughout the day. They engage with students in the corridors and during duty, fostering positive interactions. I observed a staff member effectively calming excited students at lunchtime, resulting in immediate positive responses.

The pastoral structure guarantees collaboration; each team includes a Student Learning Officer (SLO), a Student Wellbeing Officer and a SEND team leader. An assistant head of year explained how this empowers colleagues to consult with each other to maximise early help and access to appropriate levels of support and intervention, this is facilitated by weekly pastoral meetings as well as through informal discussion. He articulated how working with the SEND team leader for his year group, enables structured and intense conversations leading to more successful outcomes, rather than just 'passing over' to the SEND team.

Staff discussed the concept of 'responsive interventions,' emphasising the importance of identifying effective strategies. In one instance, a student coping with bereavement participated in memorial hearts work to better understand his grief, which received positive feedback from his parent who appreciated seeing that aspect of her son's emotional processing. The Additional Needs Coordinator provided insight into how a dysregulated Year 10 student is encouraged to run up and down the stairs outside the Bridge to expend energy; another student confirmed that this activity helps her manage stress effectively. Some students self-refer for interventions and are advised to have a detailed conversation with their head of year if they believe they require support.

Conversations during the day with staff, pupils and parents reinforced the view that there is an immense level of pride felt by everyone about their school. The parents spoken to were extremely positive about the school and could not fault the support all staff offer them and their children. Nothing is too much trouble, and support is quickly offered and issues resolved.

It is apparent that leaders consistently think 'outside the box;' they use their initiative to challenge expectations and preconceptions of what young people can achieve. Next year, smaller groups will be used for teaching students who struggle with larger groups in English, maths, and humanities. The programme will be implemented across year groups using data and discussions with subject leaders. A significantly differentiated



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curriculum will be provided for some students, such as those at risk of receiving low grades, this will safeguard their ability to achieve some qualifications.

This ongoing work is a testament to a dedicated staff team who work diligently to provide exceptional learning and pastoral experiences for all their students daily. Leaders continually seek innovative ways to inspire and motivate students, aiming to help them achieve their potential and enhance their future opportunities.

It was a privilege to revisit the school to conduct their review and witness their plans in action. The dedicated and enthusiastic staff provide excellent support, care and learning experiences in an outstanding inclusive environment. Students were candid and willing to share their views. The school's conduct and behaviour reflect a mutual respect and partnership and all should be immensely proud of their achievements.

Having discussed the progress made from the last IQM review and the school's plans for next year, I am of the firm opinion that the school should continue to be awarded Flagship School status and be reviewed again in 12 months' time. 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 Alyson Tolley

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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