



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Overview

Ashwood Spencer Academy is a larger than average Primary School that serves a diverse and vibrant community in Derby. A significant proportion of pupils are from families for whom English is not spoken as a first language. Pupil mobility is high with pupils regularly arriving at the school 'mid-year' and in many cases this is as a result of a recent move into the country. The catchment area of the school could be regarded as an area of high deprivation in relation to the national demographic. There has been some instability of staffing in this last year and some changes in key personnel at the Spencer Academy Trust that the school is part of.

Despite the challenging context, Ashwood Spencer is a truly special place to visit. Leaders have established a resolute culture of trust, kindness and high expectations for all. In all aspects of the school's work, the pupils' needs are put first. The staff that work at Ashwood Spencer are truly inspirational. Every member of staff spoken to on the review day demonstrated a profound sense of pride for the school they work in, the pupils and families they serve, and the community they represent. They are passionate about wanting the very best for the pupils in their care and they go to extraordinary lengths to ensure they provide the very best learning opportunities and experiences for the pupils they teach and nurture. As I listened to the stories that individual staff members shared, I was particularly struck by the sense of joy that staff clearly felt from carrying out their extra commitments. 'Its hard work, but seeing the impact it has on the children makes it all worthwhile' exclaimed one member of staff as she described the wonderful moment of her pupils visiting the seaside for the very first time as a result of a carefully organised school trip.

Despite the large size of the school, no child is left behind or goes unnoticed at Ashwood Spencer. Every child is seen as special individual and staff go to incredible lengths to ensure all pupils' needs are catered for and they are given every opportunity to thrive socially, academically and emotionally. The staff know their pupils incredibly well and this was reflected in comments and discussions with staff members throughout the review day. The Inclusion Lead has a phenomenal level of understanding of the pupils within the school including specific details about family backgrounds, previous educational experiences and provision that is in place for each pupil. To have this level of knowledge of individual pupils in a school with 629 on roll is nothing short of exceptional.

Leaders are acutely aware that a comparatively large proportion of the pupils that attend Ashwood are living in vulnerable circumstances. Since the last review visit, systems have been further refined to ensure that no time is lost in ensuring that pupils' needs and barriers to learning are identified quickly, and the right level of support is put in place without unnecessary delay. This is coordinated primarily as a result of the appropriately named ASAP (Ashwood Support Allocation Panel) meetings in which staff referrals are regularly reviewed and actioned accordingly. Further amendments have been made over the past year to the tracking information that is disseminated to staff. A clear overview sheet is now shared with teachers which highlights the pupils that are faced with significant challenges such as safeguarding, attendance issues or SEND. Additional developments to systems over the last year have included the introduction of the Thrive programme to offer bespoke support to pupils with Social Emotional and



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Mental Health (SEMH) needs or challenges. This support takes place in a bespoke classroom space in the school in which identified pupils are expertly supported by trained staff. Part of a session was observed during the review day and it was heartening to see pupils enjoying and flourishing in carefully planned activities including baking.

The learning walk around school revealed a school where inclusive practice is extensively embedded into every aspect of provision in all year groups. There is a calm but purposeful atmosphere throughout the school, underpinned by consistent routines and structures as well as warm, respectful relationships between staff and pupils. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils are included within classroom practice regardless of need or background. Technology is used effectively to support both teaching activities and formative assessment practices with all pupils from Key Stage 2 onwards benefitting from the individual allocation of an iPad.

The staff present as a united team and welcome the wide range of support and opportunities they receive at Ashwood Spencer. They are united in their ambition to ensure the very best for the pupils at Ashwood and they are relentless in their determination not to let a pupil's background define their outcomes and ambitions. One teaching assistant I spoke to encapsulated this by stating 'you've got to show them you can do anything and there's no limit to what you can achieve.'

Staff value the training and professional development they are given by leaders in the school and this directly feeds into the overall school improvement aims. For example, the behaviour policy has recently been revised to ensure it is now routed in a 'trauma informed' background. Staff have welcomed the new knowledge and strategies that the training has provided for them and this is beginning to become a more embedded approach in how staff and pupils recognise and respond to displayed behaviours in school. Already, consistency of transition processes and classroom routines are embedded in classroom practice with all teachers utilising consistent strategies. For pupils whose home lives can often lack routine and consistency, these thoughtful initiatives and adaptations help to provide the much needed stability in school that, in turn, leads to a psychologically safe environment for the pupils that attend.

Ashwood Spencer Academy was already an excellent example of how a mainstream primary can provide excellent inclusive provision. The lengths that leaders and staff go to ensure that all pupils have access to an enriching and memorable education experience is second to none. Notably, this is a school that does not 'rest on its laurels' when it comes to its educational offer. It is consistently striving to achieve better outcomes, care and support for the pupils and families it serves and the determination of leaders and staff is highly commendable.

Overall, it was a pleasure and privilege to visit Ashwood Spencer Academy and carry out this Flagship Review. It is an excellent place of learning that is making a profoundly positive difference to the lives of children.

The school continues to move from strength to strength in terms of its superb inclusive practice and I am firmly of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark to maintain its status as a Flagship School. I therefore recommend that the school retains its Flagship Status and is reviewed again in 12



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months. The next review will look closely at how the school has interacted with its Inclusion Cluster and promoted continuing outreach. Evidence of cluster working will underpin the capacity for the school to maintain its Flagship Status.

Assessor: Mr Richard Kitching

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. McCann", is positioned above a dotted line.

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