

10<sup>th</sup> December 2018



Mr Kevin O'Neill  
Principal  
St. Colman's PS and All Saints Nursery  
Monteith Road  
Annaclone  
Banbridge  
BT32 5LS

## **Flagship Review Date: 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

### **Summary**

St. Colman's Primary School and All Saints' Nursery is situated five miles outside Banbridge in the village of Annaclone in a vale of sloping fields with almost uninterrupted views of the picturesque countryside. The name Annaclone is from the Gaelic Eanach Cluna meaning 'The Bog in the Meadow'. The school sits neatly into its hilly site although this means that the natural flow of rain affects the outdoor space of the school and indeed the pupils refer to their pitch as a 'boggy field'. The serene, rural aspect of the school is inviting and the school entrance can easily be located for visitors. At the threshold of this school is evidence of a number of achievements including the IQM Flagship plaque while at the school gates the green Eco flag is on view for all to see. To the right of the building is another flagpole (usually a contentious issue in Northern Ireland) but for the first time I viewed a flag especially commissioned with the IQM Flagship logo-an impressive, visual celebration of the school's inclusion ethos.

This was a return visit for the assessor to review the first year of Flagship status for St. Colman's and All Saints' Nursery. The serenity of the environment is replicated within the school where the business of education, with successful outcomes, happens with skill, determination and an outward looking perspective for both staff and pupils. The school has an enrolment of 219 with 8 statemented pupils. This number is predicted to increase year by year with the building of new houses locally. It is a Catholic, maintained school with strong values and an ethos which promotes home, school and parish links.

In practise and policies, the school values are shared by all members of this school community. The children's behaviour in classrooms, the dining room and corridor is exemplary. Just as previously found they are welcoming, friendly, well-mannered and inquisitive as well as confident and eloquent. They enjoy engaging with each other and visitors. There is a real sense of community which includes yet protects the most vulnerable of its pupils. As one parent aptly summed up 'the school includes everyone in everything'.

Inclusion values permeate the school from the Nursery to Primary 7. Teachers celebrate the achievements of all the pupils but are especially proud when a child with complex or physical needs is successful, either academically or at the many extra-curricular activities available to all.

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The educational experience provided by St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery is supportive and motivating. It is built on the premise of high expectations with praise for every small step towards improvement. The children here are thriving, their understanding of the world around them is developed through the on-going Shared Education project, Eco work and international links, while their physical and mental well-being is supported by the Mile a Day initiative and Relax Kids programme.

The school is led by a hardworking, enthusiastic Principal, Mr O'Neill who is extremely proud of his staff and the pupils. His commitment as an Ambassador for IQM has provided him with the opportunity to become an Assessor for the award, and therefore observe many more opportunities of good practise and share his own. While the children are encouraged in a positive way, so too are the teaching and support staff. In particular, the appreciation for the classroom assistants is very apparent. In fact, there are aspects of the school's wrap around provision that could not happen without the commitment of the support staff. Their roles are fully integrated into the curriculum and credit for their work was consistently emphasized throughout the day.

This visit sees the school in a transition year, moving from assessment of the original elements of Centre of Excellence to reviewing how the school has worked towards 4 substantive targets and their classroom or school-based research project based on the excellent, inclusive practise over a number of years. It should be noted that clusters have not been set up in Northern Ireland as yet. The project could not be assessed as it is still at an embryonic stage with the Principal having just returned from a visit to the University of South Denmark where the strategic partnership was discussed in depth.

The Assessor had the opportunity to speak to many stakeholders including parents, pupils, teachers, Governors, the newly appointed Vice Principal and the Principal. The interviews with the SENCO and the Literacy and Numeracy Co-ordinators evidenced how mental health support, curriculum development, improvement in assessment and self-evaluation are improving outcomes and giving teachers a focus for intervention.

Further evidence of the inclusive practice of the school was provided by the Primary 7 guides who escorted me on a Learning Walk, pointing out the colourful noticeboards and explaining the relevance of each headline title to school life. This month a noticeboard reminded everyone that the school value of "Respect" was a focus in each year group. The pupils made it clear that they are very proud of their House system (each house named after a province in Ireland) and the opportunity to gain rewards for the team. The pupils are knowledgeable and articulate. They were able to give a balanced report of the school environment pointing out the work of teachers to provide a beautiful outside learning area but also explaining that a programme of repair, in line with the School Development Plan was imminent.

In St. Colman's and All Saints' Nursery the children are given the opportunity to take responsibility, show initiative and enhance their talents. This was observed at the delightful Primary One assembly where every pupil could contribute, and many had some short lines to speak. Using familiar nursery rhymes, they explored a theme of thanks to God for their daily food and drink.

The Shared Education programme with Fairhill Primary School is now in Year 4 with continued funding from the Department of Education. The ETI gave a very positive evaluation report (October 2018) of the Shared Education project in the area. The two

schools using a topic approach are exploring reconciliation and diversity through play. On the day of the assessment there was an exchange visit between the two schools with the children from Fairhill PS on site. They are now very familiar with their partner school. For the teachers it continues to provide development opportunities and share pedagogy.

In St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery inclusion values permeate everything they do. It is wholly child centred and listens carefully to the pupils' voices. Parents also feel valued for their contribution to the life of the school and in turn appreciate the dedication of all the staff in the education of their children. In August 2018 a parent wrote a thank you letter recognising how his daughter's teacher "took her under her wing", turned around her reading skills, made sure she settled in, grew her in confidence and ensured she secured a place in Grammar school.

The Newcomer child is just one example of the school's commitment to ensuring inclusion has a positive outcome. The diverse needs of pupils in a small school also has its challenges for staff but the emotional attachment to their school community, the enthusiasm, professionalism and hard work are also the foundations on which inclusion is sustained.

Although the school project could not be assessed there remains substantial evidence, validated across a range of sources to show how the school has progressed inclusion. Therefore, I recommend that St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery should retain its Flagship status and be reviewed in 12 months' time.

The next review will focus on the project with the University of South Denmark and targets reflecting the School Development Plan and the well-defined action plans of the recently appointed Senior Leadership Team.

IQM will look closely at how the school has interacted with its Inclusion Cluster and promoted continuing outreach and in-school research. Evidence of Cluster working will underpin the capacity for the school to maintain its Flagship status.

**Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:**



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



## Sources of Evidence: Oral

- School website, twitter page and school App.
- Interviews with: Principal, Teacher in charge of the Nursery, Literacy and Numeracy Co-ordinators, new Vice Principal, Parents, P6 and 7 pupils (Learning Walk, School Council, Mentees), informal chats to canteen staff and pupils having lunch, three Governors, SENCO, Classroom Assistants.
- Observation of noticeboards and their relevance to in the inclusion ethos of the school.
- Visit to the new Junior Library, informative conversations with my guides on the Learning Walk.
- Attendance at the lunch time Maths Booster club for P6/7.
- Visit to P2 class sequencing a story using a pictorial story board.
- Visit to the Motor Sensory group.
- Attendance at Primary One assembly.

## Documentary Evidence:-

- School Development Plan 2017-20.
- Inclusion Policy 2018.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2018, Photos of Safeguarding team.
- Staff Handbook.
- Minutes of the BOG 2018.
- Letter to DE in relation to the Minor Works Dec 2017.
- Information for Substitute teachers.
- Poster celebrating World Down's Syndrome Day March 2018.
- Literacy File including benchmarking data and analysis of literacy scores 2018.
- Information on targeted pupils for intervention.
- Action Plans for Literacy and Numeracy 2018-19, analysis of data.
- Marking and Feedback Policy.
- BOG Annual Report to Parents 2018.
- BOG Self -Evaluation.
- Parent's Survey Oct 2018.
- Letter of Congratulations in relation to the Diocesan Inspection 2018.
- ETI Evaluation of the Shared Education Project.



### Commentary on the last 12 months.

- The review of the action plan evaluates the progress towards achieving the targets set during the first year of Flagship status. They reflect the needs of the school and the recommendations of the Assessor. I was able to refer to oral and documentary evidence to determine if the targets had been met and their impact on the educational experience provided by St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery. It was also important to determine how the school had progressed its inclusion practice.

### Target One:-

- The Principal and Governors identified the need for a Senior Leadership team and since the last assessment have appointed Co-ordinators for Literacy, Numeracy and a new Vice Principal (Start date 27<sup>th</sup> November). This is an important step forward in realising a more distributive leadership and developing new skills which will benefit the pupils. The SLT will now have 4 members on the team with complementary roles in specific areas. The Principal will be able to relinquish some aspects of his heavy workload to the VP and Co-ordinators. The chair of the BOG explained that the recruitment process for the Vice Principal was focused and specific to meet the needs of the school and in particular, ICT. A brief chat to the new Vice Principal, who was on site to meet her Primary 5 class confirmed her specialism in ICT and her plans to integrate the iPads more effectively into teaching and learning. This is one of the action points in the SDP.
- My interview with the Literacy Co-ordinator was very insightful and validated how responsible leadership can impact on inclusion and improve outcomes. Mrs McMahon has taken over her senior post with enthusiasm and a desire not just to improve literacy outcomes but to evaluate and ensure that improvement is really happening. A range of strategies to self-evaluate include using the Trusted Colleague Network for Book Scoops and personal monitoring of the teacher's own practice. Evidence in the literacy file confirmed the work of the co-ordinator to introduce a consistent marking code which could be easily understood by the pupils and parents. Since last year work has also been done to improve recount writing and secure more impact from the Accelerated Reading Programme through rewards at assembly. The detailed action plan builds on prior success which show that literacy scores were up by 7.5% in the 115 plus band. Each child has an action plan and early intervention for underperformers includes peripatetic support.
- In spite of union action, the teachers volunteer to meet twice in a month to review their action plan.
- The Co-ordinator was accompanied by two classroom assistants as she is also their line manager. They provided oral evidence of how included and valued they felt. They meet monthly with an agenda issued in advance. They also have the opportunity to suggest items for discussion and take the minutes. Their roles can be varied, from supporting a Down's Syndrome child, developing resources e.g. for the P1 Assembly, or running the after-school's care which is available until 6 pm. There is a team of 8 CA's who all wear a uniform which they requested. Their sweatshirts and T-shirts bear the school logo, which gives them a real sense of belonging to the school community. The Literacy Co-ordinator organised a special breakfast for the



CA's in June 2018 as a thank you for their special support to the teachers and of course, the pupils with additional needs.

- One of the CA's I spoke to helps with the 'Sensory Motor Group', which is an amazing occupational therapy initiated by one of the teachers to support pupils who need to settle before class.. I observed 6 boys participate in the programme, the teacher, explained that some of the pupils are referred by their parents as well as the teachers. The children have this therapy as part of their Individual Education Plan (IEP). It is available 3 mornings a week and the activities require the pupils P2-7 to listen to instructions, concentrate on the physical activities and then relax before joining their class teacher. Evaluations of the therapy report positive benefits for the children and their attention span in class.
- During my visit I also had an interview with the new senior teacher responsible for numeracy. Ms Finnegan took over this role from the Principal in September 2018 which has the advantage of an informed handover and training on site. There is also a detailed action plan for numeracy which not surprisingly focuses on analysis of the data to target intervention. The co-ordinator, using data, identified the fact that Primary 6 girls from January-June 2018 were underachieving. It appeared that boys were more competitive and in January 2019 to redress this, there will be a Maths club for P7 girls only. This will promote confidence, allow the girls to feel more included and prepare them for post-primary school.
- The school is fortunate to have Izak 9 as a resource for improving numeracy but teachers reported that they needed further development. This happened in August 2018 together with their Cluster schools and the teachers of Primary 5, 6 and 7. Curriculum meetings continue to self-evaluate progress and improvement. Targets have been set based on the scores for each class and early intervention comes from a 'Catch Up Scheme', supported by a classroom assistant who has had training in numeracy. Ms Finnegan is enthusiastic and hard working. I attended her Booster Maths club during lunchtime for Primary 5 and 6. Her lesson was engaging for the pupils and built on prior knowledge of area and perimeter. We were all included in the problem-solving activity and there was such excitement when pupils discovered for themselves the answer. All her comments were positive and for those who had struggled the teacher explained the process of solving the problem. There is also an award for Mathematician of the Day. Not only is the Co-ordinator determined to improve numeracy skills but she is developing her own leadership skills through participation in the Senior Leadership Programme, a Northern Ireland wide training scheme.
- It is evident that having made these senior appointments there has already been progress towards curriculum development, improved outcomes and achieving the targets in the School Development Plan.

### Recommendations for the next year.

- The Principal can support and coach his new SLT, meeting regularly as a team to review action plans but also to give the new appointees an opportunity to self-evaluate and identify any staff development needs.



## IQM Flagship Review



- The Vice-Principal can bring a new perspective to the school's inclusion policies and in line with Flagship status can produce the annual report of progress of the new project as the basis for the annual review.
- Promote and support other local schools which may want to become IQM schools.
- Extend the use of school data to inform intervention and self-evaluate.
- Develop the leadership skills of the middle managers.
- The Principal can give information on courses for new governors and a short presentation on inclusion to the re-constituted Board of Governors.

### Target Two:-

- This target to provide an all-weather sports/playground has now progressed to the stage where contractors will be on site this term. The Principal is also in advanced negotiations with a local farmer to buy some additional land for outside play and sports. My discussion in relation to this target was with a range of stakeholders. On my Learning Walk it was interesting to hear from the pupils that the only thing about St. Colman's they would change was their outside space and have room for proper football nets. The Principal supported by the Board of Governors has worked tirelessly to achieve this target and the assessor was able to validate this orally from the pupils, governors and also written evidence to the Department of Education. The achievement of this target encourages inclusion in a very practical way as a large all-weather playground will facilitate the whole school together for break and lunch. The children will have opportunities to meet new friends and try out a variety of new games and activities to complement the mile-a-day programme.

### Recommendations for next year:-

- This target can now be removed from action planning as completion of the work in the school is imminent.
- This target can be replaced by a 'Well-being programme' for pupils, teachers and support staff which brings together how play, sports, assemblies, friendship, healthy eating and mindfulness support inclusion. Can the canteen offer a vegetarian option? This develops the SDP which tells the pupils: We want to be fitter and more active. To be inclusive, staff welfare is also very important and should be explored.

OR

- Choose another aspect of the SDP which promotes and develops IQM Flagship status.

### Target Three:-

- This target aimed to have curriculum meetings with parents in September 2018. The action plan was to inform parents at the beginning of the academic year about their child's class and homework, school routines and the high expectations for all



children within a strong pastoral environment. These meetings are further evidence that the school motto: Progress Through Partnership, Leading to Excellence is not just a strapline but a serious reflection of the outstanding work of all the staff in St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery. Evidence of success of the curriculum meetings was validated by the Principal, Co-ordinators but of most relevance by the parents. I met 4 parents, 3 of whom attended the meeting and the other parent whose spouse attended. There were extremely positive comments about the relevance of the meetings. All parents agreed that they were informative and that the teacher presentations were excellent, at an appropriate level and demonstrated how 'open and approachable' the school is. Parents also reported that it reminded them that 'they could always touch base' with the school. One parent commented that 'at all levels the school gets it right'. Parents appreciated how scores from Progress Through Maths/English (PTM/PTE) were carefully explained. Having positively endorsed the curriculum meetings, parents soon diverted to some further anecdotes of how inclusion is always at the heart of the educational provision of St. Colman's PS and All Saints Nursery.

- As a Flagship school it is worth recounting examples of how these parents and especially their children benefit from the inclusion ethos of the school. A Newcomer child was given support to improve her numeracy based on the data from her previous school. She was given a great welcome by staff and pupils and it was a smooth transition for the child. In St. Colman's PS she improved dramatically, benefiting from the Accelerated Reading Programme and this September 2018 began her post primary education at a grammar school.
- Another parent shared how her autistic son (Primary 7) is well settled. His teacher explained to the class about autism and his peers are accepting and supportive. Another child suffers from visual stress and uses overlays to alleviate the problem. One of the parents explained how anxious she was about her Down' Syndrome daughter starting All Saints Nursery. The Principal worked with the parent to be flexible, alleviate the parent's fear and now her lovely daughter is enjoying a great experience at nursery. On my visit to All Saints' nursery I had the privilege of observing the child's curiosity at my presence and noted how she is fully integrated into the life of the school. In the Nursery I was very interested to hear about the 'Getting Ready to Learn', a new initiative which has two aims this year: Big Bedtime Read and to include parents in their child's education called How Education Works-how parents can help. A final comment from a parent about how the school supported her child who has epilepsy was 'absolutely fantastic'. On a different note parents talked about communication with the school. All of them were familiar with the school App, the Twitter account and the very private Facebook page, just for the school community. They all agreed that safeguarding is a priority and knew who the relevant personnel are. The Assessor observed that photographs of the safeguarding team are prominently displayed in the foyer. All visitors have to have a Visitor Pass. A final quote from a parent sums up the school: 'a school at the centre of its community-a community at the centre of the school'.

### Recommendations for next year:-

- In line with developments in the action plan make the minor adjustment to the curriculum meeting for September 2019 based on parent evaluations.



- SLT look at the pupil/parent/staff surveys to prioritise further curriculum links with parents.
- Ask pupils how their parents can help them e.g. reading/numeracy? On the basis of this, arrange nursery/key stage related workshops.

### Target Four:-

- This target refers to the development of a mentoring scheme, recruitment of new mentors and the identification of pupils who might benefit. To validate the evidence, I spoke to two Primary 6 pupils about the mentoring scheme. They were unsure as to why they participated in the programme but were aware of letters being sent home. They agreed that they had tasks to do, one remembered doing comprehension and the other had to learn the flags for a quiz. In total, the Principal mentored 21 pupils by himself. This appears a mammoth task for one person and due to the number being mentored pupil and mentor met only once every half-term. The pupils were however very enthusiastic about the reward trip for mentees to the UTV television studios. The Principal indicated that the pupils outperformed their peers in literacy and numeracy.
- One parent who is a Governor had a more informed and enthusiastic perspective on mentoring. He pointed out that his daughter had improved in confidence and was challenged to read more difficult books. He applauded how the scheme allowed pupils to set goals for the future and to become skilful at self-management. At the BOG members reviewed the outcomes of the mentoring scheme and they indicated they were very positive.
- Having trained new mentors the Assessor would suggest that delegation of the mentoring scheme to other teaching staff would be more appropriate. The Chair of Governors agreed that the scheme needed some more depth to be most effective and must relate to the key stage 2 curriculum. The Principal also reported that pupil and mentor should be carefully matched. As an experienced mentor I would suggest that building a positive relationship with the pupil will then deliver good results. Pupils should have a log book which reflects what they want to improve over the period of the mentoring. This is a unique and excellent scheme which the Principal has introduced to St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery. As an initial trial it is to be commended as inspirational and very worthwhile. It is a scheme which sits very well with Flagship status. Once this year 2018-19 is over, the project can be shared with other primary schools.

### Recommendations for next year:-

- The assessor recommends that having reviewed the mentoring scheme, the school should now initiate the relevant changes and give pupils, identified through a set criterion the opportunity to improve their outcomes linked to the curriculum.
- It would be useful to note soft outcomes such as their confidence, motivation and organisation skills as well as formal outcomes.
- Mentors should only have 4-5 mentees to give more depth to the scheme.



## IQM Flagship Review



- Continue the excellent communication with parents and guardians.
- Record the pupil voice about mentoring for Flagship assessment next year.
- Share this good practice with other schools.
- Continue with this target for review of Flagship status in November 2019.

### Recommendations for the project with the University of South Denmark

- This an amazing opportunity for the school and for Flagship status. For the review next year desired outcomes should be explored which progress further inclusion values. A detailed action plan, with a specific timeline will guide the school and Assessor but most importantly outline any staff development and benefits for the pupils at St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery.

**Assessor: Teresa McNamee**

**Review Date: 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018**