



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School Name: St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery
Monteith Road
Annaclone
Banbridge
BT32 5LS

Head/Principal: Kevin O'Neill

IQM Lead: Kevin O'Neill/Aisling Morgan

Date of Review: 26th November 2020

Assessor: Barry Carney

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group – Ferrero Roche

Ambassador - Kevin O'Neill

Date of Next Meeting - TBA

Next Cluster Group Meeting Focus: TBA

Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day:

Discussions with:

- Principal/IQM Coordinator
- Maths/PE Coordinator/SLT
- Vice Principal & ICT Coordinator
- Representative from AmmA
- Pupils
- Classroom Assistants
- Class teachers
- Literacy Coordinator/Classroom Assistant Line Manager/SLT
- Parents
- Governor



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Additional Activities:

The following documents were made available prior to or during the meeting:

- Transitional School Development Plan
- ICT 3-year plan
- ICT Calendar
- ICT Tracking Action Plan
- IQM ICT presentation
- Video of St Colman's Life
- Various photographs of children engaged in learning

Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The School's progress from the previous year were based on the project focus of *'Using ICT to Promote Whole School Development.'*

Training has inspired confidence in all staff and has led to purposeful and creative use of ICT. The training was led by staff from AmmA, a Creative Learning Centre for the Education Authority in Northern Ireland. This has included led in-class training with all classes, whole school training on animation and a whole staff meeting to agree on ICT planners.

The school is underway with its target of participating in the Connecting Classrooms Project and have been successful in their bid for funding from the British Council. Inter-school projects have begun with pupils exploring local and global issues from different viewpoints and multiple perspectives and engaged in respectful interactions with others. The pupils are taking a positive and pro-active role in developing global learning within their school, for example, through School Council or planning global learning days.

School Leaders have developed a coherent and consistent approach to the collation, sharing, analysis and use of data from Accelerated Leader to check the children's progress and identify underachievement. The school can demonstrate that well focused targets and appropriate intervention strategies have led to improved outcomes for individuals and groups of children. In addition, there has been relevant training including developing reading across the school.

Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

The school intends to continue with its project focus of *'Using ICT to Promote Whole School Development.'* Due to the pandemic and political consequences of the UK and



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Northern Ireland leaving the European Union, the original intentions of twinning with Danish schools have necessarily been suspended. The school appointed a new Vice-Principal who has considerable expertise in the use of ICT in school and will lead the development of this project. This year the school intends to ensure progression and continuity in student learning, maximise student outcomes, utilise and exploit the full potential of technology and maximise student motivation and engagement.

The school, therefore, is putting in place a Transitional Project in line with Transitional School Development Plan and new DENI Priorities for 2020-21 with a particular focus on Blended Learning, Recovery Curriculum and DENI TPL strategy.

The school has put forward detailed plans for this transitional project which will bridge pre and post pandemic. In short, the following foci inform the school's actions:

Recovery Curriculum

- Supporting me to build positive relationships with others.
- Supporting me to manage my feelings and behaviour.
- Supporting me to enjoy and achieve.
- Supporting my physical health and wellbeing.

Blended Learning (Below are the 3 scenarios which will require Blended and/or Remote Learning):

- School is open and children are in class.
- Self-isolating (on an individual basis possibly because of close contact testing positive).
- Bubble Collapse/National/Island Lockdown.

Engagement Programme

- Enhancing parental engagement to support their child's learning.



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The Impact of the Cluster Group

St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery are active participants in their cluster group, Ferrero Roche. The Principal, who is a fellow IQM Assessor is also Ambassador for the Cluster Group. I discussed the impact of one cluster meeting with a member of staff who attended along with two classroom assistants, to look at the nurture provision at a cluster school. Whilst no further meetings have been held since the lockdown, the school has benefitted from cluster meeting that explored the following:

- A School Community Response To Managing Bereavement.
- Promoting Pupil Voice and Participation, which was hosted by St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery.
- Whole School Approaches to Nurture.



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Overview

Warm, welcoming and wonderful, St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery are a beacon of inclusive practice. Leaders and Governors have a clear vision for the school which includes being an *“inclusive, caring school where childhood and community are valued.”* School staff are supportive of this vision and work exceptionally hard with great skill and dedication to ensure that they make it a reality. Parents unequivocally recognise and applaud the efforts of staff and leaders who have built their confidence and gained their trust.

St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery is a small, rural, Catholic, co-educational school of St. Colman's Parish, Annaclone. The present bright and well maintained building was opened in September 1971, although there has been a school in the parish since 1866. In 2011 a nursery unit was opened catering for 26 pre-school children. The present school is a single storey building with 5 classrooms, 2 mobile classrooms, a play room, a multi-purpose group room, general office, Principal's office, staffroom, library/special needs room, school hall, football pitch, storerooms and a separate nursery unit. Dinners are cooked on-site. The school is well resourced and equipped to meet the demands of the N.I. Curriculum.

The school serves the entire Parish of St. Colman's (Annaclone) and St. Mary's (Magheral), taking pupils from an approximate 3 mile radius. Currently, there are 190 children enrolled in the school and 27 children enrolled in the nursery unit. The school is a Catholic school and provides an ethos where pupils are part of a Christian community. Children are respected as individuals and helped to develop to their full potential. The Catholic ethos permeates throughout the entire school day and great effort is made to prepare children thoroughly for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Communion and Confirmation.

Sport, outdoor learning and play are valued aspects of the curriculum and a significant investment over time has been made to provide appropriate resources. The contribution of parents in this respect has been significant. Due to the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to visit the school but staff shared photographs and videos which gave me a fair indication of the provision and the way in which children are able to access this enriching dimension of the curriculum. The contribution that this plays to wellbeing, resilience, cooperation and happiness is fully understood by staff. It was delightful to hear about and see photographs of 'Welly and Waterproof Wednesdays' and how children are able to engage in creative activities using scraps of pipe, wood and various other materials to conjure up magnificent artefacts and ingenious contraptions such as a 'secret trap with a cannon that fires cannonballs. The well-equipped outdoor classroom is used by every class weekly and often forms the venue for a number of different roles plays such as a car wash and a supermarket shop.

I met with a representative from Playboard Northern Ireland, an independent charity and lead organisation for the development and promotion of children and young people's play. She spoke highly of the work at St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery. Such is the commitment to outdoor play; the school are engaged in the Taking Outdoor Play Seriously (TOPS) Quality Assurance Programme and Award for Outdoor Play aimed



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at supporting schools to bring about a comprehensive transformation of the school environment in order to encourage and support outdoor play.

The school has forged an excellent relationship with the local football club who, amongst other things, provide the venue for the school's annual sports day. Despite the lockdown, the school ran a virtual sports day this year which involved children performing a number of challenges at home and sending pictures into school which were then put together and posted online. The school also employs a number of Sports Coaches to provide coaching for hurling, football, athletics, swimming and much more. The school has a Healthy Eating Policy which is shared with parents and encourages the provision of a healthy balanced diet.

The school has a very well thought through plan for ICT and it is an ideal Flagship Project as it contributes significantly to the schools excellent and developing inclusive practice. I met a representative of AmmA, a Creative Learning Centre for the Education Authority, Northern Ireland. It is a centre where technology alongside traditional media can be used creatively by schools, organisations, the youth sector and the community. The school has secured a two year partnership with the AmmA Centre which is principally about providing high quality professional development for staff. I heard about the positive partnership that had been developed and the ongoing work and a presentation was shared online that outlined developments and future plans. One of the slides quotes John Dewey who said, *"If we teach students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow"*. In this innovative school, they certainly have an eye for the future.

I met two pupils who were excellent ambassadors for their school and who had both taken advantage of the opportunity to contribute to the pupil leadership. They told me about their experience at school and also about how the school organised home learning during lockdown. They described how they used Google Classrooms as the main platform for home learning (and See Saw for the younger years) and how the experience was engaging and fun. They were appreciative of their teachers' efforts and the feedback and regular communication they received. They also told me about how the school arranged for classes to communicate via an online platform and the introductions of virtual assemblies.

Leaders recognise the value of its staff and invest in their wellbeing and professional development. Through the Shared Education Project, staff have been able to collaborate with Fairhill Primary School. In pursuing the IQM Project, staff have received training from AmmA in developing the creative use of ICT. Staff have attended IQM cluster meetings and I heard how three staff, including two classroom assistants visited Fairhill to learn about their Nurture Room. Recently, in a laudable attempt to foster the wellbeing of staff, one classroom assistant has led the introduction of the Step Challenge, a Northern Ireland Public Health initiative to promote healthy lifestyles. This has proven to be a hit with the staff and is likely to continue beyond the scope of the programme.

Parents are very supportive and complimentary of the school, its staff and leaders. One parent described how staff adapted provision in order to cater for her child's additional needs. She explained that her son had flourished and how the staff were able to identify strategies that worked. Parents were very happy with the arrangements for home



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learning during lockdown and explained that learning packs of hard copy materials were available for families to collect if they could not access the programmes online. They told me that communications are always good but especially so during the period of lockdown. Prior to lockdown, parents explained that the school would hold a number of events to which parents and the community would be welcome such as the Easter Fair. They also said that the PTA was particularly active and raised significant amounts of additional income.

Parents were keen to express their gratitude and admiration for all staff who went above and beyond to support them and their children during lockdown. One parent described how a class teacher had visited a beach and collected a pebble for each child in her class, had painted a rainbow, written the child's name on each one and then sent photographs of them to the children. Another told me that the school had delivered leavers jumpers to all the children in Primary 7 who had missed out on the celebrations of their time at school before moving up. One parent was moved to say that *"...all staff are loving and caring, willing to share big time, welcoming and smiling; this is a very special place"*.

Governance is strong and well informed. Governors bring a wealth of experience and skill to their role and are supportive of the school's vision and aims. Despite the lockdown, Governors continued to meet virtually and crucially, were involved in the discussion about creating a COVID-19 safe environment for pupils and staff upon return from lockdown.

The school is situated in a small, rural village and plays a huge part in the life of the village and those who live there. The school runs a breakfast club and after school club which is appreciated by parents. The school has forged strong partnerships with the local football club and the schools involved in its Shared Education Project. Leaders are also keen to engage with many external organisations in order to enhance provision. It is a shame that the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 has resulted in the school having to postpone its plans to link with schools across the globe, although there are provisions to do this remotely as an interim measure. Collectively, this engagement with the wider community introduces an element of diversity that would otherwise be missing.

The school should be congratulated for the skilful way in which it navigated a smooth course through lockdown. The understanding of the context and empathy with their families is outstanding. Staff described procedures which were adapted to ensure safety and the continuation of a meaningful experience throughout the closure. Since September, further measures have been taken to maintain a safe environment and experience for all who work and learn at St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery. The work of support and site staff to make the environment safe for teaching staff and pupils is highly commendable. St. Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery continues to move from strength to strength in terms of its inclusive

Having discussed the progress made since the last IQM review and the school's plans for the future, I am of the opinion that the school should continue to hold Flagship School status and be reviewed again in 12 months' time.



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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: Barry Carney

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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