



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



School Name Studio West
West Denton Way
West Denton
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE5 2SZ

Head/Principal Andrew Dryden

IQM Lead Ms Laura Bell

Date of Review 24th November 2025

Assessor Ms Emily Greenhalgh-Stone

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group Tyne and Wear

Ambassador Ms Annette Sowden

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Spring 2025	20 th March 2025	Yes
Summer 2025	3 rd July 2025	No
Autumn 2025	18 th September 2025	No

Evidence

This was Studio West's first annual review as part of their Centre of Excellence status. The IQM co-ordinator discussed, in detail, the documentation required as part of the renewal, alongside a timetable of events for the day, which were varied and detailed.

During the visit to the school, evidence of the school's progress included:

- Tour of the school, including classrooms, social and outside spaces during break and lesson time.
- Participation in a Junior Leadership session with Key Stage 3 (KS3) students
- Conversations with a range of staff members, including the Headteacher, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) and member of the safeguarding team
- Lesson walk-about across numerous subjects and all key phases
- Informal conversations with students and staff throughout the day



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- Visits to the Bridge Provision
- Virtual meeting with the Local Authority (LA) Designated Officer for Safeguarding
- Sharing of books and folders during lesson walk-about
- Student meetings to capture voice and feedback
- Parental conversation

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Staff in school were positively looking forward to the upcoming cluster meetings, as the opportunities to hear ideas from a range of settings will be invaluable to the ongoing work around inclusion within the school and Trust. Evidence of Cluster working will underpin the capacity for the school to maintain its Centre of Excellence status. The school will be calendared to lead the cluster group in the new academic year, and will work alongside the IQM ambassador for the region to promote inclusion within the cluster group.



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Evaluation of Targets for last 12 Months

Target 1:

To improve the standard of quality first teaching to include all students, and also those who have an additional need, to achieve a sense of belonging.

The appointment of Departmental Directors, skilled in leading each subject across the Trust, has produced improved outcomes for last year's cohort of students. This recent implementation has succeeded in embedding improved curriculum sequencing, a broad, ambitious intent along with development of middle leaders to improve consistency in their subject areas. Each subject teacher then begins with model lessons, a scheme of work and the autonomy to adapt the lesson for the students they teach. Every class has a series of individualised learning plans, with teachers annotating 'over and above' the core offer, in line with section F provision. As a consequence, students make progress over time, and develop respectful, caring and trusting relationships with their teachers, who they know do the best for them.

A further year of the model's implementation will improve outcomes even further, as the school, supported by the Trust, continues to invest in leadership development through the 'Living Leaders' programme.

Target 2:

Reduce the number of suspensions for all groups of students.

Studio West is a school who know their challenges, know their families and know their students. High expectations of everything students can achieve is evident, and leaders do all they can to reduce suspensions where possible, whilst maintaining high standards across the school. The creation of 'Re-set' and 'Aspire' provision for year 9 to 11 students has shown some improved results and relationship-building with families who most need to be reached. The school's graduated response to need has been prevalent in reducing suspensions, giving students the opportunity to start again, explore a holistic pathway, work through their difficulties and, in some cases, reintegrate back into Studio West. This 'school within a school' model is reaping results, with students speaking positively of smaller class sizes, increased intervention and, fundamentally, continuing to belong as part of the Studio West family.

Further work in continuing to hone this approach will reap reduced suspension figures as the school work with others in the Trust, and across the Local Authority, to provide increased opportunity for those students who require further intervention and support to be successful.

Target 3:

Reduce absence and persistent absence rates to improve student progression, whilst ensuring accurate measures are taken in relation to safeguarding.



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Student attendance is steadily improving, with a 0.4% increase in the last academic year. Persistent absence figures are decreasing over time and showing incremental reduction year on year. School staff work tirelessly to increase student attendance, build positive relationships with families and change the local generational perception of school. The start to the student day is a welcoming one, with staff visible in communal areas, employing a friendly, relationship-based approach. Staff know every student's name; each child has a sense of mattering, and being part of the school is increasingly important to them. Over time, this increased sense of belonging will result in improved attendance across all phases and key stages.

Target 4:

Increase student engagement beyond the school day, offering opportunities that promote a sense of belonging.

In October this year, 19% of students within the school were remaining at school after 3pm daily for optional enrichment sessions, showing an increase from 15% in September 2024. The introduction of 'elective' sessions is also a highlight of the student day, with young people keen to discuss their learning choices, which range from (but not limited to) foreign film club, hair and beauty, performing arts and a baking/catering offer requested by over 250 students. The National Literacy Trust (NLT) showcase event was a huge success and enthusiastically spoken about across the junior leadership team. This trust wide show was supported by students providing the catering and then serving food to the audience, taking part in the performances and bringing together textiles, the arts, music and dance.

Look at the potential to incorporate a gardening/small-scale forest school club, led by vulnerable learners, to transform the pond area of the school and create a green space environment for all to use and enjoy.



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Agreed Targets for next 12 Months

Target 1

Enhance the teaching of students with additional needs by delivering weekly staff Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions focused on whole-school priorities. This will strengthen high-quality teaching for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) students and improve all staff's understanding of SEN/D.

Comments

Studio West have a small, committed staff team who model appropriate behaviour to students at all times. A strategic CPD calendar or sessions tailored to student need, whereby training is reflective in a 'plan, do review' cycle, has already been determined by leaders and will be added to throughout the year. The school have identified some trends apparent in the coming academic year, along with transition learners currently attending a local feeder primary school, and are taking steps to work with other professionals such as the sensory service, providing training for Studio West staff as part of an ongoing approach to collaborative practice.

Target 2

Through the effective use of Re-set and Aspire provisions, deliver an individualised and holistic education package for students at risk of permanent exclusion, with the aim of reducing suspensions and improving engagement and outcomes.

Comments

Studio West is a school who are doing everything they can, outside of their limits, to provide the best possible outcomes for students, but, most importantly, they work hard to keep their students safe. The gradual and graded intervention will be further developed over the course of this academic year, and beyond, to provide key opportunities for all students to be successful both academically and socially, attend and belong.

Target 3

Increase overall school attendance to achieve an annual average of at least 91%, ensuring consistent improvement across all year groups.

Comments

Over the course of the year, the school have made incremental improvements to improve attendance of the most vulnerable learners. Where students do not attend as well as they should, a triangulated approach of family working, local authority oversight and school staff will be utilised to provide a network of professional curiosity and signposting of families to services that can offer further guidance and support.



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The work leaders are relentlessly undertaking across all areas of the development plan will aim to provide an increased sense of mattering and belonging to young people, along with fostering success academically, thereby improving student's willingness to engage over time.

Target 4

Increase opportunities for students to develop cultural capital by providing experiences that promote understanding and appreciation of diversity, including different faiths, religions, and cultures

Comments

The school have identified key themes to increasing student engagement in the world around them, beginning with local religious leaders input during assembly time, and giving students a 'taste of the olive' in relation to improving world views, tolerance and respect. The school rightly include all students of all diverse groups in their approach to all belonging to the Studio West family.

Overview

Studio West is a small, inclusive school, with a warm, friendly and rigorous approach, alongside a strategic vision in helping children to succeed in all aspects of their lives. Located in an area with significant challenges and high levels of deprivation, the school goes 'above and beyond' to provide a high quality of education for all students. At this small school, there are no limitations to 'what can be done.' The staff team, as a collective, provide extensive support for young people facing a range of highly complex and difficult challenges, including, but not limited to, special educational needs, disability, poverty, high rates of crime and poor health care opportunities in the immediate locality.

The school has seen substantial change since its inception, and is now entering a phase of improvement and development. It is clear that the Trust, and supporting leadership teams, are 'on the same page' and use effective team and multi-agency working to promote a positive experience for all students, parents and stakeholders. As the SENCo explains: *'what is over and above elsewhere is normal, everyday, here.'* As a consequence, inclusion is embedded in practice, and is improving daily through the ongoing work of a committed leadership and staff team.

The increasingly holistic curriculum, gradually intervening where necessary through the 'Re-set' and 'Aspire' provisions, nurtures those students who need it most, and improves life chances for the most vulnerable. As a consequence of strategic consideration to reducing exclusions and supporting successful outcomes for students, young people who attend Studio West have countless opportunities available to them in which they can thrive.

Exciting learning environments are provided, not just through the elective education sessions whereby mixed-age groupings come together to learn broader life skills (of which students spoke extremely positively) but through well-constructed lessons, crafted with the proviso of 'Review – Connect – Learn – Apply.' Students are engaged in their learning, and are becoming increasingly successful across the subject areas. A number of students were aware they found some subjects difficult to contend with. Where this was evident, students spoke highly of the staff support they are offered which improves their learning outcomes. One student, when asked who they would ask if they needed help, said; *'anyone at all.'*

In a year 7 drama lesson, a skilled teacher linked learning to previous knowledge, with a stepped approach to success and impressive student books with key vocabulary evident. Students who would never have performed to an audience previously, did so, alongside music, showing great technique. As a consequence, all students were engaged in their learning, followed the routines of the class teacher and showed impeccable behaviour throughout.

A meeting with the Local Authority (LA) Designated Safeguarding Lead (DLS) was incredibly insightful into the day to day work the school undertake to keep children safe. Increasingly beset by complex situations, the LA officer spoke highly of the school, stating that the IQM Co-ordinator 'always has the right people, at the right time, in the right room. She knows the school, community and the families well. She's always



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thinking two steps ahead.' This is testament to the Team around the School working together to provide targeted intervention for the most vulnerable in society in a timely manner.

Upon leaving for the day, I happened upon a parent collecting their child; we walked together to the car park. The parent spoke at length about the school being '*transformative*' for their young person, who had been observed earlier in the day conversing with a member of the senior leadership team in a warm and friendly manner. The parent explained: '*she loves coming to school now, it's easy to get her there on a morning, not like before.*' This is testament to the relentless optimism and determination leaders disseminate across Studio West; there is a common purpose for good which is evident and restless in the search for improvement.

A highlight of the day was meeting a number of students who were overwhelmingly enthusiastic and increasingly able to articulate their career choices, improve independent skills and speak, at length, about the opportunities the school has to offer them. The key feature in every conversation was built around relationships, with students recognising the respect shown to them by staff, and the support offered to them to be successful.

I am of the opinion that the school 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 reduced the number of suspensions, ensuring that all young people have the right to thrive and attend school on a consistent basis.. Evidence of Cluster working will underpin the capacity for the school to maintain its Centre of Excellence status.

Assessor Ms Emily Greenhalgh-Stone