



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



**School** Rotherhithe Primary School  
Rotherhithe New Road  
London

SE16 2PE

**Head/Principal** Ms Lisa Christiansen

**IQM Lead** Ms Jennifer Cristobal

**Date of Review** 26<sup>th</sup> February 2026

**Assessor** Ms Heather Coward

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

Cluster Group SHELL

Ambassador Mrs Pat Wood  
Ms Debra Joyce

Next Meeting TBC

Meeting Focus TBC

### **Cluster Attendance**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Autumn 2023</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> Nov 2023	Yes
<b>Spring 2024</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2024	No
<b>Summer 2024</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	Yes
<b>Autumn 2024</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2024	Yes
<b>Spring 2025</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> Mar 2025	Yes
<b>Summer 2025</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2025	Yes
<b>Autumn 2025</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2025	Yes



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### **The Impact of the Cluster Group**

Ongoing participation in the IQM cluster group is clearly driving reflective practice and providing useful strategies and ideas that have resulted in tangible changes at Rotherhithe.

At Vauxhall Primary School the SENDCo heard about the community links the school has made, for example the Oval Cricket Outreach Team. This resulted in Rotherhithe connecting with a local care home enabling pupils to visit and engage with residents. The SENDCo has made a strong link with the IQM Lead at Vauxhall, and they regularly connect to discuss and share ideas around inclusion.

The visit to Burlington Infant and Nursery School had a particularly strong influence, particularly around research driven teaching and learning practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Here the SENDCo learned how the school is developing play, particularly for pupils with complex needs which links directly to Rotherhithe's new IQM project. The SENDCo was inspired by Burlington's outdoor provision and the implementation of the Outdoor Play and Learning programme (OPAL). As a result, the SENDCo has shared this learning with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and has already made adaptations to the playground including the purchase of new resources and the reorganisation of existing spaces. Playground Leaders are in the process of being developed at Rotherhithe, with pupil interviews already taken place.

Visiting Albion Primary School led to further developing the use of visuals at Rotherhithe to support playing games for pupils with SEND. The SENDCo shared resources she has made such as 'What's the Time Mr Wolf' using Widgeits, and the impact this has had. The SENDCo explained how all staff now consistently use visual prompts, including visuals on lanyards and chat boards. The school is also in the early stages of embedding Makaton to further support communication.

### **Evidence**

- IQM Self Review and Action Plan
- Learning walk of the school
- School website

Observations of:

- Yoga interventions
- Forest School group
- SEND PE session
- Brain Buddies session in Year 4
- Resilience Dance session



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### **Meetings and discussions with:**

- Head of School
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator (SENDCo)/IQM Lead
- Support staff including TAs and Learning Mentor
- Parent
- Teaching staff: Year 4 teacher, PE Lead, Reception teacher/ Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural (SMSC) Lead and Reception teacher/History Lead
- PE Coach
- Pupils
- Senior Wellbeing Practitioner from Groundwork



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### **Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project Wellbeing and Mental Health Project: Work of Groundwork Charity Organisation**

With a high level of Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) need across the school, leaders have focussed on strategies to strengthen early identification, build emotional literacy and embed a consistent, whole-school approach to regulation and wellbeing.

For the last couple of years, Rotherhithe has worked with Groundwork's Wellbeing in Education team. The school was selected for funding due to the high levels of deprivation. A Senior Wellbeing Practitioner has worked closely with the school, delivering a range of support including whole class wellbeing programs such as Brain Buddies, group and 1:1 intervention alongside working with parents. This has enabled both preventative and responsive approaches to pupil mental health.

A conversation with the Year 4 teacher demonstrated the positive impact the Brain Buddies programme has had on the pupils in his class. Brain Buddies is a 10-week programme designed to teach pupils in Key Stage 2 (KS2) to identify, understand and regulate their emotions. This is delivered by the Senior Wellbeing Practitioner who works collaboratively with the teachers and support staff to develop the programme to meet the needs of each cohort. For example, the Year 4 teacher identified resilience and emotional regulation as key areas of need.

I had the pleasure of observing a Brain Buddies session in Year 4 during the review day. Here pupils began with a body scan meditation and could all identify how they were feeling. Pupils had been taught about brain development and learning regulation strategies from the toolkit such as chair press ups and hot chocolate breathing. They were encouraged to identify the strategy that works for them and all contributions were welcomed and acknowledged.

Other interventions run by Groundwork include a Communication and Connections group supporting pupils with neurodiversity and/or those with social communication needs. This focuses on peer interaction, communication skills and preparation for transition. The Emotion Explorers programme for pupils in KS1 introduces emotional literacy and self-regulation. Whole school assemblies such as 'This is my Place' for Children's Mental Health Awareness Week take place regularly. The SENDCo explained that interventions are not viewed as isolated programmes but as foundations for long-term emotional development embedded across the school and at home.

The Senior Wellbeing Practitioner also works directly with families. Support involves 1:1 work for parents with mental health issues or to support their child's behaviour at home. Workshops addressing wellbeing and online safety have been delivered in response to parental requests. Feedback indicates that parents have adapted their language and approaches at home. The Senior Wellbeing Practitioner reflected on her work at the school; "Rotherhithe staff really focuses on their pupils and provide holistic support. The passion you see from teachers and TAs is evident. They work together for the best interest of the child."

The impact of the work is rigorously monitored. Pupils set an ultimate target at the beginning of the programme and reflect weekly against this, using scaling measures to



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track progress. Pupil and teacher surveys also assess the impact. During the IQM Review, teachers and TAs shared the benefits Groundwork has had, including on their own professional development. Pupils have developed new emotional vocabulary and are able to articulate feelings more clearly. Pupils independently access classroom Calm Down Kits and apply regulation strategies confidently. As a result, behaviour incidents are easier and quicker to manage. Pupils I met spoke positively about the programme stating:

“Brain Buddies sessions are where you learn different calming techniques and how the brain works when you’re angry”.

“It can calm you down when you are stressed, anxious or sad. You can remember the strategies you’ve learnt”.

“If we didn’t have ‘Brain Buddies’ we could lash out more because you don’t have the calming techniques”

“I can take my strategies into Year 7 next year”.

### **Inclusive Physical Education (PE) Project**

Rotherhithe is committed to ensuring all pupils have access to high quality PE and this is a priority on the School Development Plan. Inclusive PE was chosen as their IQM Project as leaders had identified that a number of pupils with SEND were not fully accessing their mainstream PE lessons. Barriers included low confidence, limited independence, speech and language needs, sensory processing challenges and difficulties managing competition, particularly around winning and losing.

The school works with a sports coach from Millwall Community Trust, who delivers PE lessons across the school. With support from the PE Lead and SENDCo, the coach developed a small group SEND PE intervention for targeted pupils in KS2. The weekly intervention focuses on developing core skills such as jumping, throwing and catching and coordination, alongside gross and fine motor skills. The coach explained how pupils then apply their learning from the intervention into their whole class PE lessons. This intervention has recently been expanded for pupils in Reception and KS1.

The impact of this intervention was evident during the IQM Review. The coach described his greatest achievement as seeing KS2 pupils who were previously unable to participate alongside their peers now fully included in mainstream lessons. A gradual release model of adult support has resulted in independence, and pupils demonstrate improved resilience during competitions. It was lovely to see the project in action during an observation of the EYFS/KS1 intervention where pupils took part in agility circuits and throwing and catching activities. The Coach used reduced language, visuals and adapted equipment to ensure accessibility. All the pupils were engaged in the activity and were supported to take turns and follow instructions.

The school also invests in Southwark’s PE and Sports Network (PESSN), which provides training, a PE curriculum and extra-curricular sports opportunities, all adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. They run many SEND events that pupils from



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Rotherhithe attend including the termly SEND Festival of Sport and the annual sailing festival at Surrey Docks. Further support for SEND PE is a targeted Resilience Dance intervention, for targeted pupils, including those with low attendance, adverse childhood experiences or limited access to enrichment. I observed one of these sessions and it was wonderful! School staff also work closely with families to ensure pupils with SEND can access swimming lessons.

The PE Lead and Teaching Assistants spoke about the positive impact of the project. Through training and opportunities to observe best practice, they have developed a greater understanding of how to adapt PE activities to meet individual needs. These include modifying equipment and including activities to support mobility and coordination. They have also begun to incorporate the Cherry Garden Branch Maps to inform planning for pupils with complex needs. They explained that the PE interventions have provided a safe and supportive environment in which pupils can rehearse skills and develop resilience. This has resulted in pupils being more confident to participate in their whole class PE lessons, and less reliant on their 1:1 adult support.

During the IQM Review, pupils spoke enthusiastically about their PE lessons and interventions. They demonstrated their Resilience Dance moves and yoga poses and described these as “fun” and something that makes them “feel happy.”



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### **Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project**

With the previous two projects now well established in the school, Rotherhithe will continue to enhance their inclusive offer by embarking on a new project. From discussions with leaders, there will be two strands of work: the development of a sensory curriculum and sensory room and improving the writing and phonics curriculum for pupils operating below the Early Years Foundation Stage.

#### **Developing a sensory curriculum and sensory room**

This project will build upon a previous IQM Project where sensory circuits were introduced. These are now embedded as part of every day school practice across the school. Staff have a strong understanding of the sensory needs pupils face within school. Leaders recognise that they need a bespoke curriculum and a fully equipped, designated space to support this. Although Rotherhithe currently has a sensory room, leaders have identified that this is not sufficiently calming or accessible.

To support the development of the sensory room, Rotherhithe will work with Cherry Garden Specialist School and schools from the Nexus Education Schools Trust (NEST) who have already effectively implemented these spaces within their own provision. The Head of School shared her vision for the room which includes a floor projector, illumination tubes, tactile sensory walls and an integrated music system which will hopefully be funded by a grant from the borough. Once renovation is complete, staff and pupils will receive training to maximise the effective use of the space, supported by advice from external specialists. In addition, the Rainbow and Oasis Rooms will be further developed to incorporate sensory areas.

Assessments will be used to analyse pupils' needs and to plan appropriate actions to put in place a sensory diet for pupils with significant needs. The school plans to purchase the Sensory Classroom curriculum which has been recommended by colleagues from Southwark's SENDCo Network. Teachers and support staff will receive training on the sensory curriculum and its implementation.

#### **Develop the writing and phonics curriculum for children operating below the EYFS curriculum.**

I met with the Reception teachers and SENDCo to discuss this part of the project. They have identified a gap in writing outcomes, particularly for SEND pupils and those who are entitled to the Pupil Premium Grant. There is also a significant increase in pupils who cannot access the EYFS curriculum. Furthermore, work with an external writing consultant has identified that pupils in the EYFS were not being given sufficient purposeful opportunities to write.

The Reception teacher shared his vision for writing in the EYFS, which resulted in a useful conversation around key aspects such as the importance of developing pencil grip and use of scissors, opportunities for large scale mark making with chalk on the floor and large paper rolls, and links to class topics. There will be a move towards more immersive and engaging approaches, incorporating drama, song and dance. Teachers will follow the Dramatic Progress in Writing scheme which maps the progress from



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early mark-making through to increasing fluency using initial sounds. Training is planned to support this. Resources such as ergonomic pencils and triangular whiteboard pens will be purchased to support correct pencil grip and fine motor, and cutting activities will be planned into the weekly cycle across the provision.

To further support the implementation of this project, we discussed opportunities to observe and share best practice. The Reception teacher has already visited schools within the NEST and the SENDCo suggested he also visit Burlington Infant and Nursery School, a school within the IQM Cluster where she saw strong provision for writing in the EYFS.



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### Overview

Rotherhithe Primary School is a truly inclusive school in the London Borough of Southwark. Due to the falling roll across the borough, there is a mix of one and two-form entry classes. The school context is significant, with 40% of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding and 42% identified as having English as an Additional Language (EAL). At 28%, the number of pupils on the SEND register is higher than national, and notably, 70% of these pupils are also eligible for Pupil Premium funding. There are currently 19 pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), with an additional two in process. The primary areas of need include Speech, Language and Communication, Autism and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. There has been a notable increase in pupils with complex needs, particularly within KS1 and these pupils access an alternative curriculum.

Rotherhithe has a good reputation for inclusion locally and is regularly consulted regarding EHCP placements. Staff feel strongly about inclusion, and there is a shared belief that it is everyone's responsibility. The SENDCo explained, "Our Executive Headteacher and Head of School are passionate about inclusion meaning that everyone believes in inclusion." Pupils spoken to during the review echo this belief. When asked what makes their school inclusive, pupils articulated that it is "accessible for all, including physical disabilities," and "We have a really good SEND community. I remember from our assemblies that many children have neurodiversity, and this is celebrated."

Effective SEND provision is in place at Rotherhithe. Teaching Assistants (TAs) are confident in delivering Speech and Language interventions such as Lego Therapy, Talk Boost and Talk Matters. Staff have received training in using the ShREC approach, Thrive strategies and Intensive Interaction. Interventions are rigorously monitored through data analysis and pupil progress meetings. The school has recently invested in the WellComm screening tool to identify speech and language barriers early, enabling targeted intervention. A strong partnership with Cherry Garden School has supported staff to develop provision for pupils with complex needs. Outreach staff provide training, observe practice and support the development of support plans. This has included Attention Autism Bucket Time training during an INSET day, and modelling interventions such as 'Phonics Bag'.

The significant increase in SEND has placed additional pressure on an already tight budget. TAs are predominantly deployed to support pupils with EHCPs rather than as traditional classroom-based support. Therefore, there has been a strong emphasis on upskilling teachers to meet needs through adaptive teaching and high-quality first teaching. Evidence of this was seen during the review day for example the use of Colourful Semantics and Blank Level questioning along with working walls, modelled writing, vocabulary displays and sentence stems. Leaders are currently exploring assistive technology, including the use of laptops, headphones and microphones, and have begun training in the use of Artificial Intelligence to support planning and adaptation.

Outcomes for pupils with SEND and those eligible for Pupil Premium funding are therefore very positive. Pupils with SEND achieve particularly well in reading. The



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school recently received a letter from the Secretary of State for Education, congratulating them on the excellent outcomes made by disadvantaged Year 6 pupils at the end of the 2024/25 academic year. It was recognised that the school's performance places it among the very best nationally, and this is a significant achievement.

It was interesting to hear about developments in the curriculum, particularly for Art and Design. Leaders identified that staff lacked confidence in teaching Art and therefore developed subject knowledge through investing in a scheme of work and professional development. The pupils recently received a visit from British artist Chila Singh Burman where they explored printmaking, collage and layered imagery. The Year 4 teacher reflected that Art is now used more cross-curricularly and has increased teacher confidence and enjoyment.

I met with the History Lead who shared the school's commitment to an inclusive curriculum. She introduced a whole school Black History project this year with the theme of carnival. Pupils explored themes of pride, identity and responding to hate with love, and families created carnival wings at home. The month concluded with a celebratory parade. The History Lead shared her vision of a five-year approach to Black History Month with a different theme each year. Local history projects, including research into Ada Salter and community gardens, will contribute towards the Heritage Award. Following a hiatus after the Covid 19 Pandemic, the popular International Day was relaunched this year. Families had the opportunity to celebrate and share their culture with storytelling workshops, traditional dress and shared national dishes, bringing the community together.

It was an absolute pleasure to visit Rotherhithe Primary School again and to learn of the significant developments and achievements that have taken place since I last visited. Overall, the school continues to demonstrate a deeply embedded inclusive ethos where pupils benefit from a culture where wellbeing, ambition and inclusion are central to daily life. I therefore recommend that the school retains its Flagship Status and is reviewed again in 12 months' time. Thank you to all for such an enjoyable, informative and inspirational day.

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 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: Ms Heather Coward**

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

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