



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



**School:** Hove Junior School  
Portland Road and Holland Road  
Hove  
Sussex  
BN3 1JF

**Head/Principal:** Ms Maddie Southern

**IQM Lead:** Ms Charlotte Wallace

**Date of Review:** 22nd November 2024

**Assessor:** Ms Kat Booker

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

**Cluster Group:** Cosmos Learning

**Ambassador:** Ms Fiona Robinson

**Next Meeting:** TBC

**Meeting Focus:** TBC

### **Cluster Attendance**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Summer 2023</b>	16th June 2023	Yes
<b>Autumn 2023</b>	07th November 2023	Yes
<b>Spring 2024</b>	27th February 2024	Yes
<b>Summer 2024</b>	11th June 2024	No
<b>Autumn 2024</b>	13th November 2024	Yes

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

Representatives from Hove Junior School have attended three out of four cluster meetings this past year. They have benefitted from visiting other exemplary settings in the locality they would otherwise not access, and the agendas for such meetings have been varied, relevant, and useful.

Last autumn, the school participated in a cluster group meeting where an Occupational Therapist delivered a presentation on interoception. Following this, the training was cascaded to Learning Mentors and Learning Support Assistants. The impact of this training was evident during the assessment day, with staff confidently discussing their work to help children recognise bodily changes that indicate the need to use regulation skills. Staff also acknowledged that younger children might find this process more challenging, requiring coregulation experiences with supportive adults. As children grow, they are encouraged to develop greater independence by practising regulation tools alongside adults. While these concepts are familiar to the team at Hove Juniors, the introduction of interoception has enhanced their understanding, enabling staff to articulate, implement, and evaluate strategies more effectively as a cohesive and confident team.



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



In the spring term, colleagues convened to explore trauma-informed approaches, which inspired a comprehensive review of the school's behaviour policy. This culminated in the launch of the Positive Relationships Policy during an inset training session. Marking a departure from behaviourist methods, the policy embraces a relational approach, fostering a sense of belonging, collaboration, and respect among children, staff, and families. Grounded in attachment-aware principles, the policy emphasises intrinsic motivation and the development of positive behaviour as a teachable skill rather than a response to rewards or punishments. It prioritises universal rights such as learning, self-expression, and safety while actively involving children in shaping behavioural expectations. By supporting resilience, self-regulation, and essential life skills like independence and cooperation, the policy equips children for growth. Educators guide this process using the trauma-informed PACE approach (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy), fostering opportunities for reflection, repair, and progress.

The school was unfortunately unable to attend the summer cluster group meeting, which focused on inclusion and the creative arts. To address this, they plan to liaise with the presenting school to access the resources and slides shared during the session. Meanwhile, the autumn 2024 cluster group meeting took place shortly before the assessment visit and was followed by an Ofsted inspection. While the next steps will be discussed imminently, the school has understandably not yet had the opportunity to plan its approach in detail.

In the most recent autumn term cluster group meeting, Hove Junior School found the IQM cluster at LSV Hassocks really interesting and useful. They found it interesting to look around and not only talk to staff who work with children with Autism, many of whom have anxiety but also to see the types of therapeutic support they can offer and to discuss how this is useful. The visit gave the school ideas about how to celebrate and appreciate the small steps that are made when working with these children and endorsed the things the school is already doing, especially in terms of those with ASC and anxiety who are finding it difficult to come to school.

It was good to look at some of the tools used, such as Talkabout and Hove Junior School came away with a toolkit which has many resources to use inside. The school is planning on sharing and implementing the toolkit with the wider team. Although there are some things the school already uses, the addition of the resources in the toolkit will be a further benefit to children who have different needs. The school also found that talking to the nurse about LSV Hassocks' mental health support was useful and insightful.

### **Evidence**

- IQM self-evaluation document
- Website
- Positive Relationships Policy
- Statement from Music Therapist

### **Additional Activities**

- School tour led by School Mental Health Ambassadors



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



### Meetings with:

- Inclusion Manager
- Mental Health Lead
- Executive Head
- Learning Mentors
- School's Mental Health Service (SMHS)
- PSHE Team
- Mental Health Ambassadors
- Parents and carers



# Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



## Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The school's progress from the previous year is based on the project focus, "To embed a whole school approach to high-quality mental health support for all children, led by the Federation Senior Mental Health Lead."

### **Target 1: Create and implement a one-point referral system for all mental health concerns within the school to support the early identification of pupils' specific mental health needs.**

The school's one-point access mental health referral system has been operational for over a year, serving as a crucial tool for supporting pupils' wellbeing. Using a central Microsoft form, the system gathers comprehensive input before being triaged by the school's Mental Health Lead. Accessible via a QR code and widely promoted through newsletters, posters, and displays, the system is easily used by staff, parents, and carers.

Since its launch, referrals have steadily increased, reflecting its growing visibility and trust within the school community. In Autumn 2023, reminders boosted referrals to 36, up from 33 the previous year. Spring 2024 saw further outreach, including details about the Bounce Together Survey, leading to 33 referrals, up from 23 in Spring 2023. By Summer 2024, as staff actively signposted families, referrals rose to 20 from 16 the previous summer.

Initially driven by staff, referrals now show greater family engagement, with parents increasingly using the system independently. Anecdotal evidence suggests families trust its effectiveness, with some recommending it to others. This well-promoted system continues to support the early identification of mental health needs, ensuring timely and effective support for pupils.

### **Target 2: Communicate and collaborate with parents, staff and pupils to ensure our service users help design and shape the school's mental health offer.**

The school's mental health provision is shaped through active collaboration with its community. Initiatives like the "child-friendly" mental health policy, co-created with Mental Health Ambassadors, empower pupils to lead awareness efforts and provide peer support. This creates a shared responsibility for mental health across the school.

Parents play an important role in this process. While survey feedback shows high satisfaction, with all respondents agreeing that their concerns were addressed promptly, the school aims to increase participation, as only five parents responded. The School's Mental Health Service (SMHS) commended the school's proactive approach, highlighting the importance of regular professional dialogue. Staff are well informed about available services, ensuring that support is tailored to students' needs.

Mental health is embedded in the school's culture through events like "Hello Yellow" day, which raises awareness and funds for mental health initiatives. Assemblies and classroom discussions help normalise conversations around wellbeing, making mental health a visible priority. The Mental Health Ambassadors also advocate for mental health, merging the school's policies into a cohesive document and promoting voice boxes for peer input. This allows students to actively engage in shaping the school's approach to mental health.



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Staff training supports consistent, informed care, with the Mental Health Lead guiding both families and staff. One staff member reflected, "Having a Mental Health Lead supports us. We can share knowledge and signpost families to the help they need." This holistic approach ensures that all children and families feel supported.

### **Target 3: Promote an inclusive and welcoming ethos to help break down barriers and encourage parents and carers to seek help from the school if their child is having any issues at home or school.**

Inclusivity is central to the school's ethos, and significant efforts have been made to eliminate barriers preventing families from seeking help. Referral posters have been translated into the school's top three home languages, and interpreters support mental health workshops to engage "hard-to-reach" families. Collaborations with services like Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) further ensure inclusivity for families from diverse backgrounds.

These actions have led to a sharp increase in family-initiated referrals. Regular, warm, and meaningful interactions with parents at the school gate have fostered trust, enabling families to seek support confidently. As one Learning Mentor commented, "Parents can feel criticised. Having that baseline relationship is useful as we aren't strangers." This welcoming and proactive approach has made mental health support more accessible to all.

### **Target 4: Deliver Therapeutic Support to Children with Identified Mental Health Concerns. Vulnerable Children Will Be Prioritised.**

Despite budget constraints, the school has significantly expanded its therapeutic support, including the addition of a trainee play therapist who now offers individual and group sessions across all three sites. A key partnership with Bell Tree Music Therapy has provided 16 half-day music therapy sessions, funded externally. These sessions offer children a creative, non-verbal outlet for their emotions, complementing the school's broader therapeutic initiatives.

The Diamond Room exemplifies the school's tailored approach, providing a calming space for children to work through emotions with trusted adults, often supported by a therapy dog. Collaborations with the School Mental Health Team (SMHT) offer further interventions, such as low-intensity CBT and neuro-affirming therapies. In Autumn 2023, SMHT practitioners worked directly with 10 children, highlighting the range of therapeutic support available.

The school has also embedded the Just Right emotional regulation approach, with Regulation Stations offering tools to help children self-regulate. These resources, alongside library nooks and intervention rooms, are widely used. Regular Bounce Together wellbeing surveys identify children needing targeted support, with interventions reviewed each term. For example, 13 Year 6 pupils scored below average for wellbeing in Autumn 2023, but by Spring 2024, this number had reduced to five through targeted strategies.



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



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

The school is entering the third year of its mental health and wellbeing project with a clear plan to deepen support for families. This phase builds on previous successes, focusing on greater parental involvement, improved communication, and stronger ties to the wider community.

#### **Target 1: To Reform Our Parent/Carer Steering Group to Include Both Junior and Infant Parents from Both School Sites**

To create a unified approach that reflects the diverse perspectives of the school community, the Parent/Carer Steering Group will be reformed. This initiative will include representation from both junior and infant parents, fostering enhanced collaboration and input into developing mental health policies. The group will also focus on amplifying parent voices and reinvigorating parent-to-parent support mechanisms to ensure that all families can contribute to shaping the school's mental health initiatives.

To encourage participation, informal, low-pressure activities such as beach clean-ups and family cook-offs will be organised, offering opportunities for families to connect in relaxed settings. These events may evolve into regular gatherings, such as weekly recipe-sharing sessions, which create natural spaces for discussions about mental health. Regular meetings will be scheduled at convenient times to maximise attendance, while structured feedback channels will enable parents and carers to share suggestions and concerns. By fostering collaboration and transparency, these reforms will strengthen the partnership between the school and its families, enhancing the school's ability to effectively support children's mental health.

#### **Target 2: To Ensure Support for 'Hard to Reach' Parents/Carers to Access Wellbeing Services and Support.**

During the visit, a discussion was held about the term 'hard to reach families' and how this might be rephrased as 'families that find school hard to reach'. This nuanced change in language going forward will help shift the focus of responsibility from the family and onto the school. Recognising the challenges faced by these families is essential to the success of the school's mental health project. To address these barriers, targeted outreach efforts will focus on ensuring that all families, including pre-identified vulnerable groups as well as groups that may be particularly prevalent in the locality, such as single-parent households or those living without gardens, might be identified and supported to access resources. Referral systems will also be enhanced by incorporating mental health resources into the current induction flowchart, ensuring that new families are informed from the outset, and making the current referral form more accessible.

Collaboration with local community organisations will identify and promote available support services within the school community. Diverse engagement strategies will also be employed, including the use of multilingual resources such as Microsoft Forms' multi-language support, which allows families to engage in their preferred language.



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



### **Target 3: To Help Provide Wellbeing Support Beyond Our School Gates and Add to Our School's Sense of Purpose Within Our Community**

Extending support for mental health beyond the school environment is essential to fostering a holistic approach to wellbeing. The school plans to initiate community mental health projects in collaboration with mental health ambassadors and the parent steering group, promoting a sense of community and shared responsibility for mental health.

Partnerships with the Brighton and Hove Mental Health Team might be strengthened by inviting team members to school events and providing families with informal opportunities to engage with mental health professionals. The number of school-based workshops from the team is planned to grow, with the view to potentially offering brief sessions integrated into existing events to make accessing mental health resources less intimidating. Families will also be encouraged to participate in community projects, linking school activities with broader community goals and fostering a sense of ownership and active involvement in mental health initiatives. Through these efforts, the school aims to reinforce its commitment to the wellbeing of all children and cultivate a culture of support and understanding.

#### **Other areas**

There are already plans to further expand mental health education beyond PSHE lessons, as the school seeks to embed core messages and relevant research findings across all subjects, further equipping the children with essential life skills. Inclusivity will be further enhanced by involving children more directly in referral processes using tools like translation software and visual aids to ensure accessibility for all.

To ensure the continued effectiveness of its mental health initiatives, the school will continue to implement regular monitoring and evaluation, gathering feedback from parents, pupils, and staff to maintain mental health as a central priority. To showcase the impact of these initiatives, the school may wish to further develop its evidence base by creating longitudinal impact graphs. These will track the progress of individuals and cohorts across various aspects of social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) development, currently shown with web/radar charts. By superimposing academic achievement data onto these graphs, the school can further demonstrate the critical link between emotional wellbeing and academic success. This evidence can also be used to celebrate achievements and share progress with families, staff, external stakeholders, and other settings.

Sustainability will be achieved by seeking external funding through resources such as PTA Fundraising Ideas and Charity Excellence Mental Health Grant Funding, reducing reliance on family contributions. Additionally, the school should consider sharing its multifaceted model by offering training and shadowing opportunities to other schools in the cluster and locality, strengthening the wider educational community. The school may choose to begin this process by mapping out the evolution of their journey to form a journey plan for others. This sharing of expertise and experience will not only benefit other settings but will provide an opportunity to reflect and refine as well as a potential source of revenue.



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



### Overview

Hove Junior School operates across two sites just under 2 km apart. The Portland Road site neighbours West Hove Infant's School while the Holland Road site incorporates the other half of the infant school cohort, functioning effectively as an all-through primary school. Together, these schools form the Hove Learning Federation with leaders and staff seamlessly collaborating across sites under consistent policies and shared guidance. Despite the logistical challenges of operating two campuses, the Federation's structure fosters a sense of unity and purpose.

"We believe that everyone has the right to express how they feel and seek support for their mental health, without judgement." - Website

From the moment visitors step through the school gates, the atmosphere is one of genuine care and attention. Staff prioritise children's mental wellbeing as a foundation for their learning, embedding it throughout the curriculum and daily routines. This focus creates a harmonious environment where children feel calm, content and eager to engage. Displays celebrate high-quality work, from beautifully presented essays to Monet-inspired art. The school's creativity extends to its design, with features like cascading paint pots and interactive visual timetables enhanced by Widgit symbols, making the space both stimulating and inclusive.

The school prospectus is accessible on the school's website as a video, ensuring that all families can easily access important information. Regular newsletters further demonstrate the school's commitment to engaging with the local community. These newsletters celebrate sporting achievements and global awareness days and extend invitations for parents to collaborate and share their views about the school's future.

The PSHE curriculum at Hove Junior School is exemplary, setting a citywide standard as the PSHE Lead Teacher for Brighton and Hove is based on-site. The curriculum goes beyond statutory requirements, focusing on building protective factors that foster resilience, empathy and self-awareness. A key feature is its commitment to decolonisation, ensuring that even where children do not see themselves represented in staff, they are reflected in curriculum resources, books and classroom discussions. This effort includes tackling microaggressions and embedding anti-racist practices within lessons.

As an extension to the school's Fred Shed provision, each year the school provides Christmas hampers to families they identify as being in need. Within the hampers are food items as well as gifts for children. They let parents know to expect these so that staff can tell families, "All your gifts are covered; you don't need to worry." During these times, staff are often invited into homes, demonstrating the level of trust that has developed between the school and families.

Mental health and wellbeing are treated with equal importance to physical health. Lessons help children explore and understand emotions, equipping them with skills to care for themselves and navigate life's challenges. Staff use consistent routines to maintain high expectations respectfully, for example, attention is gained through a rhythmic clap that children echo back, a well-practised strategy that reinforces order



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



and focus. Emotional regulation is deeply embedded in the school's ethos, supported by regular training in wellbeing and pastoral care for all staff. This collective understanding ensures that children receive the support they need, both academically and emotionally. British values are thoughtfully integrated, ensuring children develop a robust moral compass. Themed weeks and whole-school assemblies deepen engagement with key topics like diversity and global citizenship, demonstrating the school's long-term vision of preparing children for life, not just their time in education.

"We can't remove some of those obstacles but we can give them the skills to care for themselves."

The "Just Right" approach, the local adaptation of Zones of Regulation, is a cornerstone of the school's ethos. Regulation Stations, placed strategically in corridors, offer resources to support self-regulation, while the Diamond Room provides a serene space for personalised interventions. This sensory-friendly room, complete with soft lighting and a therapy dog, fosters trust and emotional exploration. Children cherish these spaces, appreciating the care and professionalism of the staff who guide them.

Mental Health Ambassadors embody the school's inclusive ethos. These pupils lead initiatives with flexibility and autonomy, ensuring their contributions remain meaningful. Recent projects include transforming "Worry Boxes" into inclusive "Voice Boxes," merging mental health policies into a cohesive document and launching awareness campaigns during assemblies. As one Ambassador proudly stated, "we are improving the school to make it a better place for everyone."

Interactions with children and families are characterised by respect and collaboration. Staff proactively build relationships with parents through daily visibility at the school gate and informal "gentle conversations." Parents consistently praise this approach:

"Every teacher has wanted to make this environment right for them to learn."

"They can't do enough to help her."

"The team is compassionate for the parents."

"They are proactive, always thinking ahead and dissolving barriers for my child."

These relationships have opened doors for families to access essential support, such as the Fred Shed food bank and Christmas hampers. Being told in advance of Christmas that they would be gifted a hamper including food through to gifts must undoubtedly relieve huge anxiety driven by financial pressures.

The school's Leadership Team has embedded a culture of shared responsibility, supported by ongoing training and collaboration. Biweekly wellbeing reviews between the Mental Health Lead and Inclusion Manager ensure that no child's needs are overlooked. Tailored interventions, ranging from in-house music therapy to partnerships with external services like Brighton and Hove Schools' Mental Health Service (SMHS), enhance the school's ability to respond effectively. The PSHE curriculum complements this by teaching children how to express their emotions, handle challenges, and seek support when needed.

"It's so refreshing to feel truly listened to as a parent."



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Parents particularly value the school's openness to their input. One described the school's approach as "refreshingly proactive," noting that staff were willing to try a home-based self-regulation strategy despite potential disruption, simply because it worked for their child. Another parent remarked, "everybody respects individuality—the other children don't see this as abnormal."

Hove Junior School's inclusive practices and commitment to mental health extend far beyond the classroom. Through thoughtful leadership, community collaboration, and innovative teaching, the school is preparing its children for both their present and future. By fostering trust, dissolving barriers, and celebrating individuality, it exemplifies what it means to be a truly inclusive and forward-thinking school, continuing to exemplify the qualities expected from an IQM Flagship School.

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 Kat Booker**

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

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