



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



School Phoenix Primary School
Birchfield Road
Liverpool
L7 9LY

Head/Principal Ms Terri Cheung

IQM Lead Ms Jade Morris

Date of Review 15th July 2025

Assessor Mr David Clay

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group All Inclusive

Ambassador Mrs Sarah Linari

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Summer 2023	15 th June 2023	Yes
Autumn 2023	17 th October 2023	Yes
Spring 2024	20 th March 2024	Yes
Summer 2024	13 th June 2024	No
Autumn 2024	22 nd November 2024	No
Spring 2025	12 th March 2025	Yes
Summer 2025	23 rd June 2025	Yes

Evidence

- School Action Plan.
- Discussions with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- Policies and documents.
- Learning walk around the school.
- Meeting with members of the team developing the Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) project.



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- Meeting with play leaders.
- Meeting with chair of governors.
- Meeting with Home School Link Officer.
- Meetings with parents.
- Discussion with nurture group.
- Meeting with lunchtime staff.
- Materials used for parent support groups.

Additional Activities

- Visit to Forest School area.
- Tour of the OPAL provision.

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Phoenix Primary School's renewed engagement with the IQM Cluster Group (with an alternative member of staff attending on behalf of the school in the absence of the current IQM Lead who is on extended leave) has had a notable impact on both strategic thinking and daily practice. Participation in the cluster group meetings has provided valuable opportunities for collaboration, the sharing of best practice, and professional development focused on inclusion and wellbeing.

The first meeting, held on 12th March 2025 at Eastway Primary School, explored several key areas, including the 'My Happy Mind' programme, the development of Family Hubs, and the structure and deployment of Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) units. Observing how Eastway had utilised its spaces to support wellbeing and inclusion offered Phoenix staff a fresh perspective on the importance of environment in promoting pupil engagement. As a result, Phoenix reviewed the use of its own learning spaces (particularly in the SEND base and communal areas) and implemented purposeful changes designed to reduce overstimulation and foster a calmer, more focused atmosphere. These adaptations have enhanced pupils' sense of security and contributed positively to their learning experience. The meeting also reinforced the importance of structured emotional support, aligning closely with Phoenix's priorities for pupil mental health and wellbeing.

The second cluster event took place on 23rd June 2025 at the North West Cluster Conference, hosted at Goodison Park. This meeting served as a reassuring reminder to Phoenix staff that their inclusive approach is well embedded. Staff were able to contribute actively to the carousel of discussions, sharing their own experiences and strategies. One of the central themes of the session was tackling racism in schools and fostering a culture of belonging and inclusivity, with a specific focus on empowering minorities and girls in education. These messages strongly resonated with Phoenix's



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ethos and ongoing efforts to promote equity and representation. As a result, the school introduced Racism Awareness Workshops across Key Stage 2 (KS2). These sessions had an immediate impact, sparking passionate and thoughtful discussions among pupils and creating a safe space for open dialogue. This further embedded inclusive values within the curriculum and strengthened the school's culture of acceptance and respect.

Overall, Phoenix Primary has begun to re-engage meaningfully with the IQM Cluster Group, and this renewed involvement has enriched the school's inclusive practice and strategic development. The cluster meetings have not only inspired new initiatives but have also validated and strengthened existing work. Exposure to a range of approaches and shared challenges has equipped staff with practical strategies and a renewed sense of purpose in maintaining high standards of inclusion, equity, and wellbeing across the school community.



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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

Phoenix Primary School has made strong and meaningful progress towards the aims of its Flagship Project, which centres on enhancing the quality of playtime through the OPAL initiative and deepening parental engagement to support children's mental health and wellbeing.

The introduction of OPAL as a whole-school approach has had a transformative impact. All staff took part in initial INSET training led by an external OPAL provider, which laid a strong foundation for the year's implementation. A dedicated in-school OPAL team has continuously supported and monitored progress. As a result, staff have developed a deeper understanding of the value of play and now actively encourage a wider variety of play experiences beyond traditional games. This shift is clearly visible in how children engage with new play areas, such as the sandpit and tyre trail. These additions have been hugely popular, with pupils showing increased imagination and creativity. One parent noted that the availability of diverse play resources has enabled their child to express imaginative play more freely, helping other children to better understand and connect with him. Both parents and pupils have commented on the marked improvement in lunchtime experiences, highlighting the positive effect on wellbeing and smoother transitions back into the classroom.

These developments have also enhanced inclusion across the school. Children from the SEND Hub now access lunchtime play alongside their mainstream peers, fostering integration and a greater sense of belonging. The design and use of play spaces were shaped by an audit carried out with Ben, the OPAL ambassador, ensuring that provision is inclusive, engaging, and responsive to pupil interests.

While the full impact of these changes continues to evolve, early signs are promising. Behavioural incidents during lunchtime have decreased, and outdoor play (especially in natural settings) has had a visible benefit for pupils' mental health. Children are more physically active and engaged in cooperative, cross-year-group play. Many pupils spoke positively about having "buddies" in other classes, while parents noted how these relationships have strengthened the sense of community across the school.

The physical environment itself has become a rich source of inspiration, promoting resilience, creativity, and independence. OPAL-themed assemblies take place regularly to ensure children understand how to play safely and use resources imaginatively. The school's OPAL team continues to work with creativity and passion to expand and evolve the spaces available, constantly opening new avenues for imaginative and inclusive play. Pupils are clearly excited about what's to come, with one parent even remarking that her child is now trying to persuade the school site manager to build similar 'crate creations' at home.

The school's Eco-area has also been successfully integrated into the OPAL offer. Although the Forest School lead has been on maternity leave, the green space has remained in use, offering a calm and natural play environment that contributes to the overall sense of wellbeing and further supports reductions in behaviour incidents.



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Beyond playtime, the school has continued to strengthen its offer to families through targeted wellbeing and parenting support. The Family Support Officer, supported by her talented team, has brought a wealth of experience to this work, ensuring that parents feel empowered and engaged. New staff members have helped widen the reach of this support, with particular success in engaging more fathers. While staffing challenges meant that the nurture group was paused mid-year, the team has continued to offer Thrive one to one support, and successfully delivered a variety of wellbeing programmes including Young Persons Advisory Service (YPAS)-certified React Anxiety Workshops for Years 5 and 6 and 'Think Yourself Great' groups that support emotional resilience. The broadening of this team, and trained staff returning from maternity leave will only strengthen this offer.

In addition, the establishment of a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has significantly enriched the school community. With strong parental involvement, the PTA has organised a range of events; from movie nights and seasonal celebrations to fundraising efforts that enabled a whole-school trip to Chester Zoo. This increased engagement has deepened school–community connections and created joyful, inclusive experiences for pupils and families alike.



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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

Action 1:

To further refine approaches to behaviour, ensuring consistency of application throughout the school

The school is committed to further developing its behaviour management practices, building on the well-established and successful implementation of the THRIVE approach. With THRIVE and its foundation in trauma-informed practice already a clear strength of the school, the focus now is on ensuring consistency in its application across all classrooms and settings. This is particularly important given the number of newer staff members who have joined the team and change in leadership for the coming year. A clearly defined and consistently applied behaviour framework will ensure that all staff feel confident and supported in meeting the diverse needs of pupils and ensuring all pupils thrive.

In parallel, the school will continue to refine and develop OPAL play as it enters its second year. Staff have already seen a positive impact on lunchtime behaviour, with children more engaged and purposeful in their play. Moving forward, pupil voice will play a central role in shaping play environments and activities. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that children who are harder to reach feel included and engaged, with the goal of further reducing incidents of poor behaviour during unstructured times and promoting a more inclusive, play-rich culture throughout the school day.

Action 2:

To further refine and define the graduated approach for mental health

The school has a well-established framework for supporting pupil mental health, underpinned by Quality First Teaching (QFT). However, following recent staffing changes, the school recognises the need to revisit and further clarify its graduated approach to ensure provision remains responsive and clearly communicated. As part of this refinement, the school will reintroduce elements of Forest School into the curriculum, with the Forest School Lead mentoring and training colleagues to embed outdoor learning into daily practice. Outdoor learning, including the continued development of OPAL, will remain a key aspect of the school's wider mental health and wellbeing offer and this will be further refined.

In addition, consideration will be given to how the classroom environment can support this approach and the school's ongoing redecoration offers an opportunity to design classroom environments that are warm, calm, and supportive of pupils' emotional regulation and cognitive load. Staff will explore the principles of hygge to inform their design choices, creating spaces that foster a sense of belonging and wellbeing sharing best practice across the school.

With a strong cohort of staff already trained in THRIVE and Emotional Literacy Support Assistance (ELSA), the school will also review the deployment of mental health support to ensure it is targeted effectively, reaching the pupils who will benefit most. By



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adopting a collaborative, team-based approach, staff will build on the existing strengths of the school and ensure that mental health provision is cohesive, strategic, and impactful. Clearly defining the specialisms and where these fit into a graduated approach will support this implementation.

Action 3:

To carefully manage changes in school leadership to ensure that all staff feel supported, cohesive, and united behind a clear vision

As the school moves into a new phase of leadership, there is a clear focus on creating a strong, united staff team who feel valued, motivated, and aligned with the school's vision and strategic direction. The leadership team is committed to embedding progressive and meaningful approaches to staff wellbeing, ensuring that staff feel supported both professionally and personally.

This commitment to wellbeing and cohesion will play a central role in improving staff morale, strengthening relationships, and ensuring a collective sense of purpose. A positive, inclusive working environment will also support staff retention and reduce reliance on agency staffing, helping to build a stable and empowered team. Ultimately, by fostering trust, collaboration, and shared ownership of the school's direction, the leadership team aims to ensure that all staff are working together towards a common goal with enthusiasm, clarity, and commitment and this will be demonstrated by continuing to expand and develop the additional opportunities that are available for Phoenix pupils. For Phoenix nurture and support are part of its fabric and harnessing these qualities across the staff team will ensure that all staff thrive.



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Overview

Phoenix Primary School's mission statement, 'Where We Rise to a Challenge,' accurately reflects the proactive and solution-focused nature of its staff team. The school continually seeks new ways to enhance provision and ensure all pupils are supported to reach their potential. Phoenix is a vibrant, inclusive one-form-entry primary school in Liverpool, comprising a nursery and a large Enhanced Provision. It is a hub of cultural diversity, with a dynamic atmosphere shaped by the rich blend of languages, traditions, and perspectives represented in the school community. Staff and pupils are proud of this diversity, which is celebrated throughout the academic year in meaningful and engaging ways.

At Phoenix Primary School, children are central to every decision. The school has embedded a range of strategies that promote inclusion and support a wide variety of needs. One such strategy is the use of Zones of Regulation across the school, helping pupils develop emotional awareness and self-regulation skills. The THRIVE Approach is also deeply embedded and underpins the school's work in building emotional resilience. THRIVE supports positive relationship building and uses targeted activities to help children manage their feelings, strengthening both wellbeing and readiness to learn. Despite staff turnover in recent years, strong relationships have remained central to the school's ethos and continue to form the foundation of its inclusive approach.

The Home-School Link Officer (HSLO) plays a pivotal role in connecting families and school staff, offering a holistic package of support. As one member of staff noted, "*Relationships are Phoenix's superpower.*" This philosophy is evident throughout the school, where staff view parents as partners in their child's education. Strong, trusting relationships with parents are prioritised, and experienced staff work collaboratively to provide tailored support that addresses both home and school needs.

Parents and staff spoke proudly of the warm, nurturing environment that has been cultivated at Phoenix. This ethos is mirrored in the pupils, who support one another with kindness and empathy. During the learning walk, children were observed working cooperatively, with clear examples of peer encouragement. Student voice is a key strength of the school. Pupils were articulate, polite, and enthusiastic to share the positive impact Phoenix has had on their lives. They have been active participants in local and national campaigns and even had the opportunity to visit the Houses of Parliament (experiences that have empowered them to see themselves as change) makers in their communities and beyond.

The school's Enhanced Provision, consisting of three specialist classes, is a significant asset. Staff working in these units are highly experienced and offer exceptional levels of support to children with additional needs, including those with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs). These provisions operate flexibly, adapting to individual pupil needs throughout the day. As demand and complexity of need have grown, staff have responded with creative, solution-focused approaches. The introduction of the 'Dragonflies' group, for example, has supported pupils in remaining within mainstream classes while receiving targeted intervention. Parents spoke passionately about the difference this provision has made, particularly in helping their children feel understood, safe, and successful in school.



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During the learning walk, the 'Dragonflies' space was observed to be calm and purposeful, clearly shaped in consultation with specialist colleagues. It provides an ideal setting for focused interventions and supports inclusion by maintaining links to mainstream classes. The school also benefits from a highly skilled team of intervention staff, who deliver a range of evidence-based approaches, including Attention Autism, Sensory Circuits, Lego Therapy, and small-group THRIVE sessions. The phonics programme Read Write Inc. is well established and carefully streamed to ensure every pupil receives targeted, level-appropriate teaching. This structured approach ensures strong progress in reading across the school.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing are fundamental to the school's ethos. Children are empowered to take ownership of their wellbeing, using embedded strategies like the Zones of Regulation and accessing support through self-referral to the Home-School Link Officer. The introduction of OPAL and continued development of Forest School opportunities provide regular access to nature-based learning and support positive mental health. The school has thoughtfully embedded these elements into its daily practice, ensuring that emotional development and readiness to learn are never overlooked. The THRIVE approach continues to form a cornerstone of Phoenix's mental health provision, supporting children to feel safe, valued, and ready to thrive.

Attendance has been a key focus this year, with the school rightly proud of the significant improvements made. The reduction in persistent absence is a testament to the strength of relationships between school and families. Parents highlighted how the school's support had helped them re-engage with their child's education.

The Chair of Governors described Phoenix's culture as a true 'community ethos,' highlighting the school's balance of social and academic development through an individualised, child-centred approach. The governing body brings a broad skill set and provides appropriate challenge and support to the leadership team. They acknowledged that this has been a period of significant change, particularly in leadership, but commended the improvements seen in learning environments, which are being redesigned to support pupil focus and reduce cognitive load. Even during the final week of term, as rooms were being prepared for painting, the school's potential was tangible.

Governors also highlighted the transformation of lunchtimes through the OPAL programme, which they noted as a lasting legacy of the current headteacher's leadership. With a transition in leadership on the horizon, governors were united in their commitment to maintaining the school's inclusive culture. The promotion of internal candidates offers continuity and the preservation of well-established relationships with staff, pupils, and families; key to Phoenix's ongoing success.

Staff at Phoenix are energised by the opportunities ahead and remain steadfast in their commitment to inclusion, empowerment, and excellence for every child. The excitement and optimism around this next chapter were clear to see. In keeping with its mission, Phoenix is a school that truly 'Rises to a Challenge.' It is well-positioned to continue evolving, innovating, and nurturing the vibrant community it proudly serves.

Phoenix Primary School continues to demonstrate a deep and sustained commitment to inclusive practice, ensuring that all pupils are supported, celebrated, and empowered to



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thrive. Opportunities to support other, less diverse schools were discussed during the visit and could provide an exciting avenue for Phoenix to expand its impact.

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: Mr David Clay

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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