



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



**School Name** St. Clare's Primary School  
323 Cupar Street  
Belfast  
BT13 2SE

**Head/Principal** Mr Brendan Birt

**IQM Lead** Ms Tracey Logue

**Date of Review** 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026

**Assessor** Ms Breegeen Doherty

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

**Cluster Group:** Ferrero Roche

**Ambassador:** Kevin O' Neill

**Next Meeting:** Sept 2026

- Meeting Focus: EAL provision/technology to enhance pupil voice/ whole-school nurture approaches

### **Cluster Attendance:**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Autumn 2025	20 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2025	Yes
Winter 25/26	29 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2026	Yes
Spring 2026	12 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2026	Yes

### **Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day:**

For this IQM Review, the school provided the assessor with evidence of their commitment to Inclusion. This included the following:

- Tour of the whole school including the Nursery School, the Nurture room (Infinity) and outdoor areas
- Visit of the Nursery, of the Specialist Provision and of outdoor play
- Visit to classrooms including EAL and Literacy Support room



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- Access to school website and social media platforms
- Access to recent School Report

### **Review of Comprehensive written evidence including:**

- IQM school file
- IQM self-evaluation report
- Samples of students work
- Photographic evidence in all areas
- Range of school correspondence (including translations into numerous languages)
- School Policies

### **Meetings held with:**

- Principal
- IQM Lead
- External Contacts
- Social group coordinators
- Rights Respecting Council
- EAL Teacher
- SPIM Teacher
- Friends of St Clares
- EAL parent
- Classroom Assistants



### Evaluation of Targets for last 12 Months

#### Target 1: Quality of Provision - Developing Play Experiences & Outdoor Learning

The school has made strong and creative progress in developing outdoor learning despite significant challenges, including the temporary closure of the school garden. Staff demonstrated resilience and innovation by establishing and sustaining meaningful partnerships with community organisations.

Pupils now benefit from rich, hands-on learning experiences including planting, harvesting and environmental projects. These experiences promote engagement, wellbeing and real-life learning. Work on a previously decontaminated site, developed over several years in partnership with the community, exemplifies the school's commitment to providing meaningful, contextual learning opportunities. Pupils demonstrate ownership, pride and a strong connection to their environment.

#### Next Steps:

- Continue to strengthen community partnerships
- Further develop outdoor learning spaces, including sensory and play-based environments
- Embed outdoor learning consistently across the curriculum

#### Target 2: To upgrade and extend pupils' experience of quality nurture resources and support.

This target has been very successfully achieved and is now a defining feature of the school.

Nurture is fully embedded across the school, with consistent practice evident in all classrooms and specialist provisions. The Sunshine Room provides highly effective targeted support, complemented by whole-school strategies such as calm corners, safe spaces and targeted social groups.

The school has also developed innovative approaches to parental engagement within nurture, including structured parent-child sessions and ongoing communication. Staff training and capacity building ensure that nurture principles are understood and applied consistently across the school.

The impact is clearly evident in pupils' increased confidence, improved emotional regulation and readiness to engage in learning. Pupils who have accessed nurture provision are successfully reintegrating and, in some cases, taking on leadership roles within the school.



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### Next Steps:

- Sustain and further develop nurture provision
- Continue to expand targeted interventions and counselling support

### Target 3: Promoting links with the parents of pupils at the school and local community (including other schools)

The school has made significant and highly impactful progress in rebuilding and strengthening relationships with parents and the wider community.

A wide range of strategies have been implemented, including the reintroduction of assemblies, development of parent groups, regular coffee mornings and targeted workshops. Communication systems are strong and inclusive, ensuring parents feel informed and valued.

The school's work with families extends beyond education, providing practical support where needed and fostering a strong sense of belonging. Cultural events such as Iftar celebrations and Mother Tongue Day further enhance community cohesion and inclusion.

Parental feedback highlights the school's nurturing ethos, strong communication and inclusive approach as key strengths.

### Next Steps:

- Continue to expand and deepen parental engagement opportunities
- Develop further parent education programmes
- Strengthen community links and shared learning opportunities



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### Agreed Targets for next 12 Months

**Target 1: To enhance pupils' reading comprehension and critical thinking by developing teachers' use of high-quality, purposeful questioning during guided reading sessions.**

#### Comments:

This is a well-chosen and appropriate target, building effectively on the school's established strengths in communication, inclusion and pupil voice. The strong emphasis on language development, particularly within EAL provision and nurture practices, provides a secure foundation for this work.

The school plans to develop a more consistent, whole-school approach to high-quality questioning within guided reading. This will include focused professional learning to support staff in the use of higher-order, open-ended and probing questions, alongside opportunities for collaboration, peer observation and the sharing of effective practice. Agreed approaches and prompts will support consistency across year groups, while ensuring appropriate differentiation for all learners, including those with EAL.

There is a clear intention to further develop pupil independence through the promotion of pupil-generated questioning and structured discussion. Monitoring will include work scrutiny, learning observations and pupil voice, ensuring that developments are embedded and lead to measurable improvements in comprehension, engagement and oracy. The school is well placed to ensure that this work has a sustained and positive impact across all settings.

**Target 2: To improve the children's mathematical attainment, with a focus on measures and their application in the real world.**

#### Comments:

This target is well aligned with the school's strengths in experiential learning and the use of meaningful, real-life contexts. Existing practice provides a strong basis on which to build greater consistency and progression in the teaching and application of measures.

Planned actions include the development of a clear progression framework for measures across all year groups, supported by targeted professional development to enhance staff confidence and subject knowledge. There is a strong emphasis on embedding learning within practical and relevant contexts, particularly through outdoor learning and community-based activities. Opportunities to apply mathematical understanding across the curriculum will be further developed, ensuring that learning is purposeful and transferable.

The school also intends to extend the use of practical resources and problem-solving approaches to deepen understanding and support application. Assessment processes will be used effectively to track progress, identify gaps and inform next steps. Through



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this work, the school aims to secure improved outcomes, alongside increased pupil confidence and competence in applying mathematical skills in a range of contexts.

### **Target 3: To promote children's wellbeing, learning and aspirations via community collaboration.**

#### **Comments:**

This target builds on a significant and well-established strength of the school. Community collaboration is already highly effective in supporting pupil wellbeing, inclusion and family engagement. The school is very well placed to further develop and extend this work.

Planned developments include strengthening existing partnerships and establishing new links that provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to engage with their community. There is a clear focus on extending pupil participation and leadership within these initiatives, supporting the development of confidence, responsibility and aspiration. Opportunities for parental engagement will also be further enhanced through shared learning experiences and community-based activities.

The school intends to develop more systematic approaches to capturing and evaluating impact, including the use of pupil and parent voice and the documentation of outcomes. This will support a clearer understanding of how community engagement contributes to pupils' wellbeing, learning and future aspirations.

Overall, this target reflects the school's strong inclusive ethos and provides a clear pathway for further development, ensuring that community collaboration continues to have a sustained and meaningful impact.



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

Engagement with the IQM cluster group has had a clear and positive impact on practice within the school, supporting both professional learning and the ongoing development of inclusive provision.

Staff have engaged meaningfully with key themes from recent meetings, particularly in relation to EAL provision, pupil voice and whole-school nurture. This has strengthened existing practice, rather than introduced isolated initiatives, ensuring that developments are embedded and sustainable.

For example, learning relating to EAL has supported the school in refining its already strong provision, including the use of targeted assessment approaches, structured language development and enhanced parental engagement strategies. Similarly, ideas around pupil voice, including the use of digital tools, have complemented and extended existing structures such as the Rights Respecting Council and language ambassadors.

The focus on nurture has further reinforced the school's whole-school approach to wellbeing, contributing to consistent practice across classrooms and specialist provisions.

There is clear evidence that learning from cluster meetings is actively disseminated and discussed among staff, contributing to a culture of collaboration, reflection and continuous improvement. Staff are not only implementing ideas but adapting them effectively to meet the specific needs of their pupils and community.

Overall, the school demonstrates strong and purposeful engagement with the cluster programme, using it as a vehicle to enhance and validate its already highly inclusive practice.



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### Overview

St Clare's Primary School, located in the heart of West Belfast, serves a diverse community with a high proportion of pupils experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. The school has undergone a period of sustained development and is now led by the recently appointed Principal, Mr Brendan Birt, who brings both continuity and a deep understanding of the school's ethos, having previously served as Vice Principal. The school's vision, "*Dream, Believe and Achieve*," is not simply aspirational but is clearly lived out in practice. It underpins a deeply inclusive, nurturing and ambitious culture where every child is recognised as a unique individual and supported to reach their full potential. This is reflected in a strong sense of belonging across the school community and aligns with inspection findings that pupils are "*creative, confident and resilient learners*" who demonstrate high levels of engagement and capability.

Inclusive values are at the core of all aspects of school life. Inclusion is not an isolated feature but a fully embedded ethos that informs policy, practice and relationships. Pupils are treated with dignity and respect, and there is a strong emphasis on equity, diversity and belonging. This is evident in the school's highly effective support for pupils with additional needs, its celebration of cultural diversity, and the way in which all children are encouraged to participate fully in school life. Pupil voice further reinforces this inclusive culture, with children articulating that they feel safe, supported and included, highlighting that they "don't feel alone" and that there is always someone to talk to.

Leadership and management are highly effective and characterised by a clear moral purpose, strong collaboration and a commitment to continuous improvement. Senior leaders have successfully sustained and further developed a culture where inclusion and wellbeing are prioritised alongside academic achievement. There is a strong emphasis on staff wellbeing and professional trust, with staff reporting that they feel valued, supported and empowered in their roles. Leadership is distributed effectively, with expertise shared across the school, for example through nurture provision, EAL support and SPIM practice. The school demonstrates strong capacity for self-evaluation and improvement, ensuring that developments are responsive to the needs of pupils and the wider community.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and highly responsive, with a strong emphasis on engagement, relevance and adaptability. Learning experiences are carefully designed to meet the diverse needs of pupils, incorporating play-based approaches, experiential learning and real-life contexts. Outdoor learning and environmental projects are a notable strength, providing pupils with meaningful opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and a sense of responsibility. These approaches support not only academic development but also personal growth, creativity and critical thinking, reflecting inspection findings that pupils demonstrate well-developed problem-solving and thinking skills.

Teaching and learning are of a consistently high quality and are characterised by strong relationships, inclusive practice and a deep understanding of pupils' needs. Staff demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness, adapting approaches to ensure all learners can access and engage with the curriculum. The learning environment is a significant



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strength of the school. Classrooms and shared spaces are carefully designed to be welcoming, stimulating and purposeful, with calm corners, safe spaces and sensory resources supporting emotional regulation and readiness to learn. The innovative use of space, including nurture, sensory and literacy support areas, reflects a thoughtful and strategic approach to meeting the needs of all pupils.

Assessment is used effectively to inform teaching and support pupil progress. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of pupils' individual starting points and use a range of assessment approaches to monitor progress and identify next steps. This is particularly evident in EAL provision, where structured assessment frameworks support targeted language development, and within nurture provision, where ongoing assessment informs personalised interventions. The school's approach ensures that assessment is meaningful, responsive and closely linked to improving outcomes for pupils.

Behaviour, attitudes to learning and personal development are outstanding. Pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement, motivation and pride in their work. Relationships across the school are respectful and supportive, contributing to a positive and productive learning environment. Inspection findings highlight pupils' exemplary behaviour and their ability to work both independently and collaboratively. The school places a strong emphasis on developing the whole child, with wellbeing, emotional literacy and resilience embedded across the curriculum. Opportunities for leadership, such as the Rights Respecting Council, buddy systems and language ambassadors, further support pupils' personal development and sense of responsibility.

Engagement with parents, carers and guardians is a significant strength. The school has worked effectively to rebuild and strengthen relationships with families, particularly following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Communication is open, inclusive and responsive, with a range of strategies in place to support parental involvement, including workshops, coffee mornings and shared learning opportunities. Parents are valued as partners in their children's education, and feedback indicates a strong sense of trust and belonging. The school also provides practical support where needed, ensuring that barriers to engagement are reduced and that all families feel included.

Links with the local, wider and global community are exceptional and represent a defining feature of the school's practice. The school has developed strong, meaningful partnerships that enhance learning and support the wider community. These include environmental projects, community initiatives and support networks that extend beyond the classroom. Pupils benefit from opportunities to engage with real-world issues, develop a sense of agency and contribute positively to their community. This work reflects a strong commitment to social justice and inclusion, ensuring that the school plays a central role within its community.

Overall, St Clare's Primary School exemplifies the qualities of an IQM Centre of Excellence. Its inclusive ethos, high-quality provision and strong community partnerships ensure that all pupils are supported to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. The school not only sustains outstanding practice but continues to



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innovate and develop, demonstrating a clear capacity to lead and share inclusive practice more widely.

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 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 promoted continuing outreach. Evidence of Cluster working will underpin the capacity for the school to maintain its Centre of Excellence status.

**Assessor: Breegeen Doherty**

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

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