



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



**School Name** Northfield St Nicholas Primary Academy  
St Margaret's Road  
Lowestoft  
Suffolk  
NR32 4HN

**Head/Principal** Mr Iain Owens

**IQM Lead** Ms Lindsay Higgins

**Date of Review** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

**Assessor** Dr Andrea Hall

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

**Cluster Group** MADIE A

**Ambassador** Hazel Simmonds

**Next Meeting** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026 (Review Day scheduled then, so did not attend)

### **Cluster Attendance**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Spring 2025	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	Yes
Summer 2025	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2025	Yes

This year there has been some confusion around the cluster meetings, with times and dates not being scheduled or communicated sufficiently in advance. Despite this, the school made every effort to attend, as leaders and staff view these meetings as invaluable to their professional growth and development. They spoke positively about the opportunities these sessions provide for collaboration, challenge and shared learning, and were keen not to miss out. Moving forward, clearer advance scheduling would support the school in continuing to benefit fully from these important collaborative opportunities.



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



### **Evidence**

A wide range of evidence was gathered across the school, providing a rich and accurate picture of daily life for pupils at Northfield St Nicholas. A tour with the Assistant Headteacher highlighted the many recent improvements, and the school's calm, purposeful atmosphere was evident throughout. Meetings with school ambassadors, the safeguarding officer, the Deputy Headteacher (IQM Lead), senior leaders, the SENDCo, LSAs, and governors offered valuable insights that strengthened the evidence base. Observations of a 'No Outsiders' assembly and the diverse activities available at lunchtime further showcased the school's inclusive and vibrant environment. The self-evaluation report demonstrates clear progress against current targets and provides a well-considered, ambitious plan for next year, reflecting a strong, forward-looking vision for continued development.

### **Summary of Targets from 2024-2025**

**Target 1: To ensure staff are confident in meeting the needs of EAL learners and that this is reflected in practice and progress/attainment outcomes.**

Recent developments in the school's approach to supporting pupils with English as an Additional Language, alongside wider inclusion strategies, demonstrate a strong and consistent focus on improving both assessment and provision.

Training on the Bell Foundation EAL Framework has established a whole-school, consistent method for assessing language development. Staff now identify accurate starting points and use clear progression steps, enabling more precise targeting of support. Teachers are increasingly using this assessment information to adapt planning, and tracker reviews show that pupils' starting points, ongoing progress, and timely interventions are well monitored. Samples of these trackers evidenced strong staff understanding of language acquisition and clear next steps, demonstrating that assessment is informing teaching rather than simply recording attainment.

The school's investment in Widgit software is well embedded across Nursery to Year 6. The consistent use of symbols is reducing communication barriers for pupils new to English and for those with SEND. Personalised lanyards and visual supports are also being used purposefully, helping pupils follow routines, communicate their needs with growing independence, and gradually rely less on adult support.

Leaders monitor vulnerable groups, including EAL learners, regularly and rigorously. This ensures that interventions are quickly adapted to need and that the progress of individual pupils is closely tracked. The strategic use of the POD provision is supporting newly arrived pupils and families effectively, helping to build relationships, increase confidence in English, and secure smoother transitions into mainstream classes.

Overall, pupils with EAL are making expected progress, with some already achieving age-related expectations. This reflects the positive impact of targeted adaptations on outcomes. Strong parental partnerships further reinforce learning and help sustain progress beyond the classroom.



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



An inclusive culture is evident through the school's diversity training and implementation of the *No Outsiders* programme. Training delivered by Andrew Moffat has supported staff in using consistent language and expectations, helping to embed a whole school ethos of belonging, respect, and inclusion.

*Comments:* The visit provided clear evidence of strong implementation and tangible impact. Widgit symbols were consistently visible and used purposefully across the school, promoting independence for pupils at early stages of English language acquisition. Assessment trackers reviewed during the visit showed secure staff judgments and a clear connection between assessment, planning, and intervention.

An assembly focused on challenging stereotypes in science offered a live example of the school's inclusive ethos in action, raising aspirations and promoting equality of opportunity. Staff discussions indicated growing confidence in applying the EAL Framework, while pupil voice reflected that pupils feel safe, supported, and comfortable seeking help.

The POD pathway for a newly arrived family illustrated a thoughtful, step-by-step induction process, leading to successful re-engagement in mainstream learning. Overall, EAL provision is coherent, consistent, and increasingly impactful, with clear evidence of reduced barriers, greater independence, and improving progress for pupils with EAL.

*Next Steps:* To conduct a staff survey to evaluate levels of confidence in supporting and teaching pupils with EAL and use the findings to monitor the impact of current training and support, identifying any areas where further development may be needed.

**Target 2: To ensure all groups of pupils are making measurable progress across the curriculum to achieve excellence for all, including all at risk groups.**

Leaders maintain a strong strategic focus on ensuring that pupils in vulnerable groups, including those with EAL, receive targeted support and can access the curriculum successfully. The introduction of the 'Need to Reach' register has strengthened this approach by enabling staff to identify specific barriers and disadvantages early, prioritise pupils who require targeted intervention, and sustain a 'keep up, not catch up' ethos across the school.

Staff at all levels, including teachers, HLTAs and TAs, demonstrate clear understanding of the shared school priorities through their confident explanation of the Bitesize School Development Plan. This shows that, despite staffing changes, leadership has ensured consistent messaging and steady direction across the school.

The level of need remains high, with 107 pupils on the SEND register, 27 pupils with EHCPs and 10 ECNAs submitted. Leaders have responded with a strategic focus on strengthening foundational skills. This is supported through a carefully constructed CPD plan that includes dedicated assessment time, opportunities for shared practice, book looks and targeted training. Class visits during the review showed these approaches being applied consistently.



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



Pick up and go intervention packs were seen in use across provision areas, demonstrating that targeted strategies are operational and accessible. TAs spoke confidently about how they use these resources to support pupils effectively, reflecting strong engagement and secure understanding of their role in improving outcomes.

The impact of these approaches is monitored closely through the 'Need to Reach' tracker, assessment trackers, pupil progress meetings, staff voice, the CPD plan and ongoing leadership monitoring. These systems provide leaders with an up to date and accurate understanding of pupil progress and ensure teaching strategies are adapted swiftly and effectively to meet individual needs.

*Comments:* During the visit, it was clear that leaders have established a well-organised and effective system for identifying and supporting pupils in vulnerable groups. The 'Need to Reach' register is used with purpose and provides a clear mechanism for staff to keep a sharp focus on pupils at risk of not making expected progress. Staff at all levels were able to articulate the Bitesize School Development Plan confidently, reflecting strong communication and a shared understanding of priorities despite staffing changes/absences. The high level of need was evident, and the commitment to meeting these needs was strong. In classrooms and provision areas, the use of 'pick up and go' packs showed that planned strategies are being implemented consistently, as observed in the EYFS provision. Teaching assistants spoke positively about their role in supporting foundational skills, demonstrating confidence, ownership and enthusiasm. Monitoring systems are established and give leaders a clear view of progress, enabling swift adjustments where needed. Overall, the school's strategic and structured approach is ensuring that vulnerable pupils are well supported, closely monitored and increasingly able to access the curriculum with success.

*Next Steps:* To embed consistent and effective practice in teaching foundational skills across reading, writing, and maths, ensuring all pupils, including those on the Need to Reach register and with SEND, make sustained progress.

### **Target 3: To make sure all pupils transition successfully into Northfield's including at risk groups during in year starters/transfers.**

Northfield St Nicholas has developed a structured and well organised new starter process that ensures all pupils, including those who may be at risk, transition smoothly into school. This process gathers detailed information about each family before their child begins, enabling staff to prepare effectively and anticipate individual needs.

The transition model includes school tours, meetings with the pastoral team or SENDCo, and planned communication with previous schools or external agencies. These steps ensure leaders have a clear understanding of each child's background, additional needs and support requirements. During the visit, the new starter spreadsheet demonstrated how key information is recorded and tracked, providing a thorough and well-planned approach to supporting pupils as they join the school.



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



The school also hosts an EYFS cluster transition event, bringing together nurseries, childminders and feeder schools in one evening. This shared gathering of professionals enables more efficient information exchange and allows a coordinated transition package to be put in place for incoming pupils.

Transitions are strengthened further through additional targeted actions, including extra high school transition days, EYFS stay and play sessions, visits from high school staff, Listening Ear support focused on transition, and Northfield St Nicholas staff visiting pupils during their first week of high school. Evidence during the visit showed that the early help team holds detailed knowledge of individual children and the support in place for them, reflecting strong communication and well embedded systems.

Home and school visits are recognised as especially important, particularly as only 14 percent of children arrive at school ready. Early contact with families therefore plays a vital role in securing the information needed for a successful start. Family engagement is further enhanced through initiatives such as Hamish and Milo sessions and Thrive parent sessions, which strengthen relationships, improves communication and helps reduce anxiety around transition.

Collectively, these strategies ensure that pupils settle confidently, families feel informed and supported, and staff can respond quickly and appropriately to individual needs.

*Comments:* Throughout the visit, it was evident that the school has established a well-structured and consistently applied transition process. Staff spoke confidently about how the arrangements work in practice, and the early help team demonstrated strong knowledge of individual children and the support already in place. This reflects clear communication, well-embedded systems, and effective teamwork.

The EYFS transition event emerged as a particularly efficient and impactful model, enabling multiple early years settings to share information in one coordinated event. This supports greater continuity for children and ensures that transition planning is both streamlined and meaningful. Additional activities such as Listening Ear support, stay-and-play sessions, and high school visits help reduce anxiety and build positive relationships early on, particularly for children and families who may find transitions more challenging. Evidence gathered during the visit showed that these strategies contribute to pupils settling quickly and families feeling reassured, informed and well supported. The Year 6 pupils all knew which high school they will be attending and spoke confidently about looking forward to the next stage of their learning, explaining that they feel well prepared for the transition.

*Next Steps:* To review and evaluate the transition process by collecting feedback from new families and monitoring how well pupils settle, ensuring all children, especially those with language or communication barriers, are supported from day one.



### Agreed Targets for next 12 Months

#### **Project Title: To reduce suspensions and enhance provision for vulnerable learners through the introduction of Inclusion Hubs**

I met with the project lead to discuss the outline of the proposed project and the intended impact. She outlined the following information about the project: The project aims to reduce suspensions across the school by implementing targeted, evidence-based interventions within newly developed Inclusion Hubs. These hubs will provide bespoke provision for pupils at risk of suspension, particularly those with SEND or behavioural challenges, ensuring they receive the right support to engage positively with learning. The intention is to intervene proactively, strengthen emotional regulation, and improve inclusion so that pupils remain successfully within mainstream settings.

The approach will target pupils at risk of suspension, pupils with SEND, and other vulnerable learners who require additional support. It will run throughout the academic year and will be embedded within the school's wider behaviour, safeguarding, and SEND strategy. The Inclusion Hubs will deliver personalised support informed by ABC behaviour analysis, structured routines, mentoring, adaptive teaching, and strong collaboration with external agencies. During the visit, I observed early implementation, including staff using proactive strategies to reduce escalation. Leaders also shared that the school has a foundation of evidence led practice, particularly PBIS (Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports) and now seeks to strengthen early intervention to prevent suspensions before they occur.

Research suggests that:

- Proactive, structured behaviour frameworks such as PBIS significantly reduce behavioural incidents and exclusions by promoting consistent responses and building social and emotional competence (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).
- Personalised provision and adaptive teaching are essential for pupils with SEND or high behavioural needs, as they support sustained engagement and allow pupils to access learning more successfully (Tomlinson, 2014).
- Regular monitoring and responsive adjustment of interventions have a strong positive impact on behaviour, engagement, and overall progress (Hattie, 2009), ensuring schools can intervene early and effectively.

Based on the analysis and observations conducted, a series of initial targeted actions have been determined to effectively achieve the project objectives. These actions are outlined in the following steps, providing a clear and structured plan for implementation:

**Step 1** – To establish Inclusion Hubs that deliver bespoke, evidence-based interventions for identified pupils, using ABC behaviour analysis and weekly behaviour data to inform planning and targeted support.

**Step 2** – To increase engagement and participation in learning for at least 75% of the targeted pupils within the first half term, evidenced by improved readiness to learn, fewer behavioural incidents, strengthened emotional regulation, and positive staff and pupil feedback.



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



**Step 3** – To document and track reductions in suspensions across the academic year, alongside improvements in behaviour trends, curriculum access, and inclusion outcomes, with termly reviews led by SLT, provision leads, and the Trust.

*Comments:* It was great to hear about this project and to see the Inclusion Hubs in action during my visit. The work is clearly grounded in strong research which gives the project a solid foundation for reducing suspensions and strengthening support for vulnerable learners.

I spoke with a learning support assistant working in one of the hubs, who described the positive impact the provision is already having. Pupils benefit from working at their own pace, with regular brain breaks and tailored support that help them stay regulated and engaged, reducing the risk of behaviours escalating. It was clear that staff understand the purpose of the hubs and are committed to embedding consistent, proactive strategies. Leaders have taken a collaborative approach, consulting with SES colleagues, Educational Psychologists, the Trust central team, and other schools in their cluster. This has helped refine the structure of the provision and ensure it aligns with wider expertise and best practice. We also discussed the importance of engaging parents so they fully understand the purpose and benefits of the hubs, which will help strengthen shared approaches to supporting pupils.

The project is firmly embedded within the school's Bitesize School Development Plan and is already demonstrating early positive outcomes. With continued monitoring, collaboration, and strong communication with families, the Inclusion Hubs have the potential to make a significant and sustainable difference across the school year.

### Overview

Northfield St Nicholas School continues to exemplify a highly inclusive, nurturing and forward-thinking ethos, placing the needs of its 307 children at the centre of all decision-making. The school's commitment to inclusion is not only visible but palpable: it is evident in classrooms, corridors, outdoor spaces and in conversations with staff, pupils and governors. The culture is one in which every child is known, valued and understood, and where leaders and staff work relentlessly to ensure that all children can flourish.

Inclusion is firmly embedded across the school. Leaders and staff regularly evaluate strengths and areas for development and have rightly identified the need to further strengthen foundational skills to secure improved outcomes. The CUSP curriculum remains ambitious, inclusive and challenging, and staff provide thoughtful adaptations to meet the diverse needs of their cohorts. Where further tailoring is required, for example in Year 1, staff work closely with leaders to ensure that the school's expectations are upheld and that the curriculum continues to meet the needs of all learners.

The school's restorative approach is now well established. The reduced use of 'the link' room indicates that many of the pupils are developing stronger self-regulation skills, with restorative discussions also decreasing as a result. Skilled staff identify early signs



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



of dysregulation and intervene swiftly in class, ensuring that children remain in lessons and that visits to 'the link' are the exception. Leaders are aware that suspensions rose last year and are resolute in their determination to reduce these.

Pupils speak confidently and positively about school life, frequently referring to their enjoyment of mathematics, writing, art and PE. They are proud of the rich opportunities available to them, including VR experiences, clubs, trips and visits that broaden horizons and make learning memorable. Children speak fondly of their '11 before 11' entitlement. Where pupils face barriers to accessing activities, the school goes above and beyond to ensure participation. For example, through collaboration with the Free Wheels charity, pupils without a bike can take part in 'Bikeability'.

Early Help for families remains a significant strength. The school provides extensive support to ensure children are ready to learn, including a community fridge run in partnership with local charities and Fare Share, a universal breakfast offer (bagels, bread, crumpets and cereals), and school-nurse-led parent sessions. Despite attendance being below national average, the school invests significant effort in building strong, positive relationships with families. This, combined with the wide range of supportive initiatives, is helping families to improve their children's attendance and readiness for learning.

Leaders maintain a clear line of sight on classroom practice through regular learning walks, book looks, data analysis, academy reviews and supportive drop ins, with timely feedback focused on improving outcomes. They use this information to diagnose with precision where practice is strong and where further support is needed. The EYFS lead meets with her team every three weeks to ensure pupils remain on track and learning is adapted accordingly. Teachers use assessment information effectively to adjust planning, and trackers demonstrate clear starting points, steady progress and timely interventions. Staff are supported to make every minute count through 'Pick up and Go' intervention packs, enabling adults to close gaps whenever capacity allows. Support staff report feeling well supported by leaders and spoke confidently about knowing their pupils well, with one stating, 'I know the children well, I feel involved.' Their commitment to removing barriers and tailoring provision, including learning sign language, supporting children to learn when lining up for activities and adapting communication methods, was clear. I was struck by the depth of their commitment to the children and the school.

During the visit, the 'No Outsiders' assembly delivered by the Assistant Headteacher was exemplary. Using a science link demonstrating stereotypes provided an excellent stimulus. Pupils explored inclusion and discrimination with clarity and compassion, speaking in full sentences and demonstrating a mature understanding that everyone should be included. This was reflected across the learning environment, including displays and on the playground, where inclusive options support both busy play and calm regulation.

The Deputy Headteacher and SENDCo play pivotal roles in ensuring access for all learners. Staff value their kind, caring and approachable manner, alongside the clarity of their high expectations for the whole school. The SENDCo has strengthened EYFS practice, modelling vocabulary explicitly and engaging children purposefully in



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



continuous provision by introducing 'interactive learning tours'. Inclusion hubs are improving both academic engagement and social-emotional development.

A rich menu of interventions are in place across the whole school, including sensory circuits, Thrive, Hamish and Milo, colourful semantics, breakfast and lunch clubs, Lego therapy, coaching and soft starts.

A strong sense of collective care is evident across the staff team. Colleagues describe a culture where 'we all scoop each other up,' reflecting the deep trust and mutual support that underpins their work. Staff shared that 'not only do we complete check-ins with the children, we look out for each other,' highlighting a genuinely nurturing environment. This spirit was echoed in comments such as 'This is an awesome team' and 'Everyone gets on; we are continuing to move the school forward.' The positive relationships and shared commitment contribute to a motivated, united workforce focused on delivering the very best for pupils.

The school has an excellent understanding of the eight IQM elements and uses these effectively to drive improvement. Leaders' priorities rightly focus on strengthening foundational knowledge and skills to raise outcomes further while sustaining the inclusive culture that defines the school. Governors know the school well and participate actively in school life, they understand and support the school's development priorities. They value being part of this wonderful community that puts the children first.

Northfield St Nicholas school remains an outstanding example of inclusive practice. Leaders, staff and governors work in strong partnership to ensure that pupils are safe, supported, challenged and celebrated. Having considered the progress since the previous IQM assessment and the school's clear plans for the future, it is my professional view that Northfield St Nicholas school should continue to be awarded Centre of Excellence status.

I am of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark's Inclusive School Award. I recommend that the school be awarded the Mark and be reassessed in 3 years' time. The school has stated that it wishes to continue as a Centre of Excellence and has submitted an Agreement to Participate which commits the school to annual reviews for the next 3 years (minimum) and attendance at termly IQM Cluster meetings with other IQM Centres of Excellence and Flagship Schools. As such the school meets the Centre of Excellence criteria and I am happy to confirm that Northfield St. Nicholas continues to hold Centre of Excellence status at this time.

**Assessor:** Dr Andrea Hall

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

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