



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



School Name: Will Adams Centre
Woodlands Road
Gillingham
Kent
ME7 2BX

Head/Principal: Karen Bennett

IQM Lead: Tanya Chapman

Date of Review: 12th January 2022

Assessor: Kenny Frederick

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group: 24 Carat Cluster

Ambassador: Kenny Frederick

Date of Next Meeting: 21st March 2022

Next Cluster Group Meeting Focus: Visit to Kensington School

Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day:

- Headteacher
- Deputy Head – IQM Coordinator
- SENCO
- School Counsellor
- Two students who are on the UNICEF Rights Respecting Committee
- Year 11 Outreach Manager
- Management Committee Member (Chair of Curriculum & Welfare Committee)
- School Website
- IQM Paperwork



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Summary of Targets from 2020-2021

The School's targets from the previous year were based on the following targets:

Target 1 - *To develop outreach provision from Will Adams to other Schools around inclusive behaviour.*

Outcome: This has continued in a variety of forms during the Covid 19 restrictions. Target achieved.

Target 2 - *To support Schools with identified areas of need, to deal with challenging students and for them to remain in Mainstream education.*

Outcome: This outreach has continued to some extent but has been restricted due to Covid restrictions. However, four students were supported, and successfully remained in mainstream education. This target has been achieved.

Target 3 - *To work with one school, supporting them in gaining the IQM.*

Outcome: Progress on this target was severely impacted by COVID-19 and subsequent school closures/ lockdowns. Although some movement and discussion were held the pandemic and lockdowns meant more work could not be done on this target. This target has been partially achieved.

Agreed Targets for 2021-2022

Target 1: To work with one school, supporting them in gaining the IQM Inclusive School Award.

Target 2: To continue to develop outreach provision from Will Adams to other Schools around inclusive behaviour.

Target 3: To develop a 12-week placement scheme for the purpose of reintegrating students back into mainstream provision.

Next Steps: The school has produced a new action plan to move forward with and while this is appropriate, I have suggested they include some of the opportunities that will arise as a result of them joining a small multi academy trust in April. I have also suggested they think about adopting more Trauma Informed Practice into their mental health and wellbeing strategy that the new Deputy Head is currently working on.

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Staff from the Will Adam Centre were only able to attend one online Cluster session last year due to several changes in staffing and a staff restructuring exercise meaning there was nobody to take on the role of IQM Coordinator. This situation is now resolved and there is a new Deputy Head in place who takes on that role.



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Overview

The first meeting of the day was with the Headteacher and the new Deputy Head, who has been in post since September. In discussion about what had happened over the last year and the issues that had caused most worry and concern, the school felt that they managed well during the last twelve months in terms of covid related absences and avoided having to close or send students home – except for the very last day of term when the staffing situation and numbers of students in school was untenable. It was only in the last week of the Autumn Term that this became a problem.

The school is one that offers Alternative Provision for students aged between 14 and 16, who have been either permanently excluded or who are about to be excluded from their mainstream school. Many are managed moves from a range of Medway secondary schools, and some places are acquired by schools to offer as an intervention for students who cannot be included in their schools.

Currently, there are thirty-three students (up from twenty-seven) on roll although this varies all the time. The PAN figure is fifty students. Students enter the provision at various times throughout the year. Students need to be referred to the Centre by their school or LA, and parents cannot apply for places. There is also a Year 11 placement scheme and one for Year 10 students in term 6, where students have early entry on a 12 week placement. The Centre provides outreach programmes to support students in their mainstream school. The ethos in the Centre is that every day is a new day where they can start afresh. No matter what has gone before they are able to start again. Punishments and sanctions are not part of the Centre's remit, and all the work is about resolving issues helping students understand their own behaviour and the effect it has on other students and staff. It is clear, that everything that happens here is about the students. They always come first.

The students do not come to the school with an EHCP although the SENCO has recently applied for two which were accepted. This is a triumph because it is so difficult to gather the necessary evidence and show what has been done to support the students when they only arrive in at some point in Year 10. Most of the issues presented are around emotional and social issues and most will have gone through some form of trauma in their life. They usually have no idea why they have not succeeded in the mainstream schools. As one member of staff said they did not fit the schools they were in and could not fit in with the rules and regulation which they often felt were unfair. The School Counsellor told me she runs various group sessions where she tries to help students to feel empathy for others – something that is often difficult for them. She says the students she works with have a real sense of social justice and about having their voice heard. The staff work extremely hard with students to enable them to communicate clearly and assertively rather than aggressively – which gets them into trouble. The school achieved the Rights Respecting Gold Award this year, it is a remarkable achievement. Speaking to some of the students who have been working on this project focused on the Rights of the Child they reflect how much this has influenced the work at the school.

The Headteacher told me about some of the issues she has had to deal with during the year, with the most difficult being the restructuring exercise she must tackle. This is one



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of the most difficult processes a Head will ever have to implement. It was particularly difficult that in a small school with a small number of staff who work very closely together. However, this was necessary for the financial stability of the Centre as it goes forward. There is now a new Deputy Head in post, but the post was vacant for many months). The new Deputy Head has fitted in well and is learning the way things are done at the Will Adam Centre. She has already developed strong relationships with students and staff and parents, and I can see that the Headship Team are working collaboratively together – always a good sign!

One of the current issues for the school is recruiting teachers and Teaching Assistants as a number of key members of staff have recently left or are moving on to posts in other schools. The shortage of potential staff nationally and in the area is worrying. The school needs to recruit exceptional teachers who really want to work in alternative provision. Prospective teachers need to be totally committed to working with the young people in this setting and they need to be able to develop strong relationships with the students. Staff are the greatest asset and finding the right people is a challenge. To increase capacity, the Centre has got involved with the 'Kickstart' programme and is using this to recruit adults who want to return to work who can do interventions with students (with appropriate training) and so release teaching staff to deliver in the classroom. Interviews are going on at the moment to try to find suitable people. They have also recruited an apprentice Teaching Assistant who had previously been the Head Girl at the Centre. She works twenty-five hours a week and has a have a specific role in the school. She is involved in delivering some interventions.

Speaking to the Headteacher last year as part of their IQM Review she indicated that there was a possibility that the Centre might be looking at academisation and this time she confirmed that this was indeed going to happen in April. They will join the Alternative Learning Trust, which is a PRU based trust and the vision and values promoted through this Trust are closely aligned with those of the Will Adams Centre. Everything is about the students and there is a pragmatic yet dynamic direction that the Centre will benefit from. The Trust is relatively small but is already working well and collaborating effectively for the good of the children. The Centre is collaborating closely with another school that is part of the Trust on different training opportunities and moderation exercises to name but a few. The Governors have all agreed to this move as indeed have the Unions. There was a meeting going on that day to discuss with Unions about staff being Tupeed across to the Trust. The new CEO has come into the Centre to introduce herself to staff. Pay and conditions will not change but Teaching Assistants will now receive the National Pay and conditions, which will be better for them. Staff will have a professional performance management system in place for them as part of the Trust. However, the Headteacher told me that the Centre will retain its autonomy and they will oversee the majority of their own policies. The opportunities afforded by academisation are very exciting and I look forward to hearing how this is working next year.

In discussion with the Headteacher, and Deputy Head about Safeguarding it is clear that safeguarding is a priority as many students are deemed vulnerable. Therefore, safeguarding procedures should to be constantly reviewed and updated according to need. There is a team of five DSLs including the Head and Deputy and there is a Safeguarding Governor who is very experienced in this area. The school continues to



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have good relationship with the MASH team and with external agencies. The Child Protection Team meet every Monday morning to discuss individuals and update actions. Last year the Centre received a Safeguarding Initiative Award from the Safeguarding Alliance for their work during the COVID 19 lockdown. CPOMS is used to keep track of safeguarding issues and is also used as a behaviour log. Staff at all levels, are well trained and proactively report any concerns.

It was a pleasure to meet with the SENCO to have an update on the support provided for students and to hear about the outreach work being undertaken. She pointed out that the Inclusive strategy at Will Adams is based on individual programmes for students. Students are all different and need a different approach. Most of the students have EHCPs. The small number of students in each class is key to the success of including students who cannot be included and educated in their mainstream school. The SENCO has however, applied for EHCPs for two students, in order for them to have access to further support when they go on to the next stage of their education. Getting an EHCP through the system, an already difficult process, is further hampered by the fact that students arrive at the school in Year 10 (some in Year 11) and gathering the evidence needed for the process in such a short time is challenging. She told me that many students have come to the Centre with undiagnosed needs and receiving a diagnosis takes more than three years and therefore, most do not receive the specialist support they need.

Reviewing behaviour (a rising concern for all schools during the pandemic) she remarked that behaviour is about communication and the ability, or inability, to communicate effectively which leads to frustration. Therefore, Speech and Language Support is key but is often unavailable. There is a real shortage of S&L Therapists in the county. There is a school counsellor/therapist, and students meet with her before they are admitted so that she can assess their needs and plan appropriate support when they join the Centre. Recently, boxing has been introduced as an activity and students really enjoy it and the majority participate in this activity.

The SENCO said that the small class sizes (5/6 per class) is beneficial for students as they can receive more individualised support. All the teachers are specialised in their subjects and there is a good range of subjects on offer. Students can choose what they want to study, and this helps with motivation. Each student has a pen portrait or profile which identifies their needs so teachers and staff can plan accordingly. There is a behaviour tracker that outlines what strategies work (or has previously worked) for individuals. The students contribute to the pen portraits, and this helps build their self-confidence as well as allowing them to express their views and feelings around the learning. These are regularly updated and shared with staff.

When students are admitted to the Centre many feel they are a failure and it needs to be remembered that some are there as a result of having had a 'one off' incident that was out of character for them. The Centre is aware of this fact and works with the individual through the feelings of unfairness and sense of powerlessness. These are all feelings that need to be challenged and addressed. The SENCO said that student attendance has been very good throughout the pandemic as they regard the Centre community as a family and the relationships are very strong. She commented that many of the students



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have difficulty forming relationships and have lots of gaps in their lives especially in terms of their social and emotional skills.

There is a SEN Handbook available for teachers and they come and speak one-to-one with the SENCO to seek advice when they need it. The Handbook suggests many different strategies they might try in the classroom. Another barrier to student learning is low reading and spelling skills and dyslexia is a growing identified problem. The SENCO is also the LAC Lead, and she recognises that looked after children will have gone through a great deal of trauma in their lives, so they use trauma informed approaches with all the students.

Outreach work is an integral part of the way the Centre operates and although there has been less of this during the pandemic it still continues and is highly valued by the schools requesting support. Much of that work involves staff from the Centre working with individuals or small groups of students in other settings who are causing concern through their behaviour. As the SENCO said most schools do not fit the student but expect the student to fit the school. When they do not or cannot they end up at the Will Adam Centre or similar provision. Most schools are reporting that issues around poor behaviour is causing some anxiety as students returned to school following lockdowns and the stop-start nature of the schools as they respond to outbreaks of Covid 19 and indeed often the absence of their teachers/staff who are having to self-isolate. Normal routines have been disrupted and consequently students have been disrupted. This is also the case at the Will Adam Centre and the team are having to address these challenges in school as well as continuing to support other schools.

The Mental Health Champion in the Centre told me they are applying for the 'Better Medway Award' which focuses on wellbeing – both staff and students. They started by upgrading the staffroom and turning it into a wellbeing room. There is a new coffee machine and fresh fruit, and the room has been decluttered and there are no books or items related to work. It has become a 'chill out' room now. The Centre provides Friday Breakfasts and there are various exercise classes/activities for staff. The students have been consulted through the UNICEF's Rights Respecting Award process and they used surveys and discussions to gather their views and opinions. They asked for more Forest School activities and ice skating as a physical education activity. The Mental Health Champion told me she is doing her Mental Health Lead course. She is also participating in the National On-Line Safety course, so she is well prepared for her new role.

When students first come to the Centre, they undergo an induction interview and a morning of testing. They also meet with the Centre Counsellor who is able to find out about their backgrounds and their interests and motivation. This information is useful when she is working with them as individual during their time at the Centre. The curriculum is very tailored to the individual student and the broad curriculum on offer is around the emerging needs of students and the expertise of staff. During their induction day the baseline assessments provide a starting point to work out what progress they are making or make by the time they leave. A new IT system was introduced in September that tracks student's progress from their baseline and this is proving to be extremely useful. Target setting and agreeing predicted grades is problematic because attendance can be erratic, and this can throw students off track. The Head of Year 11 said that attendance at the Centre is better than it has been when



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the students attended their mainstream school but is still only around 75%. Although this figure looks low it is above average for an Alternative Provision.

The Head of Year 11 and teacher with responsibility for the programme supporting students to get into and remain at College, when they leave the Centre said that most of the students did work experience last year and really enjoyed it. They get to go to Coffee Mornings at college as well as the Open Evenings. They find these less formal and more enjoyable to the large Open Evening event. The most popular destination is Mid Kent College in Gillingham. The support involves the Head of Year going with students to the college before they apply. Then she visits to see how they are getting. She links with the college (there is a link member of staff) and they get in touch if there is a problem. This link remains long after they have left the Centre. The strong relationship is still there. Last year they had three drop out during the year. These students found it difficult to manage in such a big college. The Careers service come in and prepare students for interviews and the DWP comes in and do interview techniques talks to them about apprenticeships. The Centre also set them up on various work related/careers websites. Information on available apprenticeships is sent out every week. She then speaks to students individually to see what they are interested in, and they try to support them with their application.

The Pastoral Manager for Years 10 and 11 is responsible for behaviour, attendance registers, rewards and of course communicating with parents. She told me that attendance has been very good last term except in the run up to Christmas when it dropped a bit. The average attendance figure is around 70% to 75% and although this might seem low it is a big improvement on the attendance of these students when they were in their mainstream school. Managing behaviour is always down to developing strong relationships and strong bonds with students. Every student is on report, and this is emailed to parents every Friday.

The new Deputy Head has assumed responsibility for teaching and learning and CPD across the Centre. Teachers in the Centre are subject specialists and usually teach their own subject and this helps them to engage the students. They plan according to the individual students and the fact that there are six, at the most, in one class they are able to do this detailed planning to meet their needs. It is therefore, a very personalised curriculum as it is all about helping students to establish the pathways, they need to take them forward to the next stage of their education or training. The school has now achieved the Gold UNICEF Rights Respecting Award, and this has a major influence on the curriculum particularly around diversity and global issues. There are lots of exciting curriculum developments they can call on through RR. There is a full menu of interventions based around core subjects as they need to ensure that students have sound basic skills so they can access the full curriculum. Literacy and numeracy across the school are important threads that go through every aspect of the school. In addition, careers and preparation for adult life and work are important parts of the curriculum. The new reporting and data system provides a proper tracking system that works through SIMS. Teachers enter the base line and the target grades, and it tells them what progress has been made each term. This is a parent friendly system and is easy to use. The small class sizes has a big impact in the students in the Centre and means teachers are able to give them more time and attention. They like discussion groups as opposed to writing but this depends on what happens during the day that may prompt a need for



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a live discussion. Teachers are very good at managing these discussions – even when they are based on difficult subject matter. The PHSE curriculum is important and covers a wide range of topics and issues and students engage fully in it. It is also a Certified Programme that uses their coursework to assess their progress.

The teacher who has responsibility for embedding the UNICEF Rights Respecting curriculum across the school was unavailable on the review day as she was currently unwell. However, two of the students who form the Student RR Committee did come to speak to me and to tell me about their input. They said that there are three of them on the committee and they have a notice board to inform students about what they are doing. They have presented and discussed a range of issues particularly around racism (BLM & Show Racism the Red Card). They have a UNICEF lesson twice a week and are given an article (RR) to focus on. Some of the topics covered include child soldiers, environmental issues and so on. They discuss different documentaries, ensuring they know exactly what is going on around the world. They also raise funds for different charities such as providing Shoes Boxes, Macmillan nurses and so on.

The students stated that the Centre is better (than mainstream) for them as its more relaxed and chilled out. It is not so formal and is a better environment to learn in. They like the small classes and they like the fact the school has a counsellor they can speak to when they need to. They get Careers input and advice and guidance and have been able to do work experience. Both students had a good idea about what they want to do in the future. There is a Facebook Page for the Centre that allows them to chat with each other. The Deputy Head teacher told me that students at the Centre have a real sense of justice and they will tell you if they feel hard done by.

Speaking with Centre's extremely experienced Counsellor informed me that she works in the school two days a week. She has an open-door policy and likes to work with students 'in the moment' when an incident happens. She has her own room, which she tells me students really like and it helps them open up and speak freely because it is 'very welcoming'. She is part of the Safeguarding Team and she told me they work together to support students and families and have been doing training with staff around the effects of trauma.

The Counsellor said that this has been a very difficult year for the Centre and the students and their families. It was hard for the students because they have spent so long away from adults. She works with them in groups so they can develop empathy. She says they are not used to being told no and being told what to do. Some have no adult to talk to. She says group work helps students to talk through stuff, but they do not always listen to each other. She has to work hard to ensure every voice is heard. There is a lot of repair work that has to be done. She told me that it has been difficult to work with parents during the Covid pandemic. The boys enjoy coming to her room to talk as they see it as a safe space. The Centre itself is a safe haven, where they never have to feel alone. The mental health and wellbeing of students and staff is a big part of the Counsellors role, and she will be working closely with the Deputy Head who is developing the Mental Health Strategy.

It was good to meet (again) with a representative of the school Management Committee (Governors) and who is Chair of the Curriculum and Welfare Committee. She knows the



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school well and she has great expertise and experience that means she is a valuable member of the management committee. We had talked about the possibility of academisation last year and she told me why she feels it is necessary. Although the school has a good relationship with the Local Authority, she said that Medway is a Unitary Authority and too small to be effective and has only one mainstream secondary school. She told me that academisation had taken place very quickly and can only be a benefit to the Centre. She feels the new MAT is very positive and the Centre will be better served by being part of the Trust rather than Medway for a whole host of reasons. The CEO and Improvement Lead from the Trust came to meet Governors and to get to know them and the school.

Talking about the most recent restructure exercise that the Governor had been involved in she agreed it was difficult for the Headteacher and indeed for Governors. She was part of the panel that appointed the new Deputy Head. However, the most recent appointment is a good fit, and they are very pleased. Governors are always aware of the Headteachers wellbeing, and she meets regularly with the Chair of Governors who supports her directly.

Governance will change under the Trust but there will still be a Management Committee who work directly with Will Adams. There will be a new Scheme of Delegation and Governors will have different responsibilities. There is a Safeguarding Gov and new SEN Governor (who is an ex-Headteacher).

Will Adam Centre provides a safe haven for youngsters who have not been able to continue with their mainstream education. This means they arrive with multiple barriers to their learning and often have complex emotional and social needs. They may have missed out on chunks of their schooling, and some will have undiagnosed or unidentified learning needs. The Centre welcomes them and provides unconditional love and support. They provide a curriculum that is tailored to students interests and they go to great lengths to provide a positive learning environment where students can thrive. Teachers are subject experts, but they also know their students well and deliver relevant and appropriate teaching ensuring students feel valued. They know staff care about them and they trust them.

I am very happy to recommend that the Will Adam Centre retains its Centre of Excellence status and is reviewed in years' time. They have produced an appropriate CoE Action Plan, but I have made some suggestions on how this might be further be expanded and improved. They have much to be proud of.

Assessor: Kenny Frederick

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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