Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project

School	The Highcrest Academy Hatters Lane High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP13 7NQ
Head/Principal	Mr Glen Burke
IQM Lead	Mrs Sue Charlesworth
Date of Review	7th November 2025
Assessor	Mr Craig Burrows

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group	Inclusion Champions B
Ambassador	Mr Ralph Silverman

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Spring 2024	15th March 2024	Yes
Summer 2024	9th October 2024	Yes
Autumn 2024	4th December 2024	Yes
Spring 2025	26th March 2025	Yes
Summer 2025	21st May 2025	Yes
Autumn 2025	6th November2025	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group

The Academy attended 5 Cluster Group meetings during the last academic year; different staff were able attend which was incredibly useful in bringing fresh ideas back to Highcrest.

The development of student leadership was highlighted to the Senior Team for implementation this year. The development of oracy was of great interest and has formed part of the planning phase for this year's journey to develop literacy skills and promote self-esteem.

After one visit the team of LSA's undertook some training by OT to look at the prospect of implementing sensory circuits at Highcrest. This initiative was then followed by the adoption of Boxhall profiles as part of the school's isolation and inclusion review.

The last area of impact was the action taken following discussions around parental engagement and early intervention. This led to targeted parent information evenings for each year group at the start of the year to support parents in their understanding of the crucial role they play in supporting the school to obtain success for their child.

Evidence

- Policies
- Intervention- overviews and impact
- School website
- School tour with the Vice Principal
- Visits to the school's support areas
- Displays and classrooms environment.
- IQM Self-Evaluation document
- Student meeting

Additional Activities

Meetings with.

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Assistant Headteacher & IQM Lead
- Teachers
- Safeguarding Manager
- SENDCo
- Attendance Manager
- Careers Lead
- Extra-Curricular/Trips Coordinator
- Students
- Receptionist
- Chair of Governors

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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The main focus of the project was to improve attendance by identifying the root cause of non-attendance and disengagement particularly at KS4. The Academy had demonstrated that there was a clear growing trend of disengagement and passive learners which was resulting in low aspiration, poor attendance and in some cases school refusal.

It was clear that in order to 're-engage' student the support of all stakeholders was going to be needed as well as external network support. Internally the Academy started the process of reviewing the GCSE option process to focus on improving literacy and offering better support for disadvantaged students and those with SEND to ultimately secure improved outcomes that would allow them to continue with the next step on their academic or vocational journey.

The Academy carried out two major reviews on their attendance and inclusion procedures and put into place a number of initiatives as a result of the reviews. The initiatives meant that students were reengaged in their learning before they were put back into mainstream lessons which took away a lot of the anxieties for the students that was often resulting in disengagement and poor behaviour. Students can now access the 'student learning zone' which has details of what they had missed in each lesson, so they are aware of why the work they were given in isolation was so important. As a result, there has been a significant drop in the number of repeat students in isolation in addition to increasing the quality of work carried out whilst in isolation.

The Academy has targeted parents to highlight the ways they can support their students through specific year group information evenings and increased the regularity of its communication.

As a result of the attendance review the weekly complex case meetings have been developed to ensure the correct members of staff are included thus ensuring swift early interventions is in place and that the desired impact is achieved for the students. The team now includes the Student Welfare Manager, Data Manager, Mental Health Lead, DSL and SENDCo.

The Academy invested in two Senior Leaders focusing on 'Challenge for All' and 'Inclusion & Belonging.' The Senior Leader for Inclusion & Belonging was the SENDCo so had a very good knowledge not only of the systems in place but more importantly the students so offering them much needed continuity. These two leaders have worked hard to ensure that the 'Challenge for All' includes every student.

Within the past year the Academy was inspected by OFSTED who clearly recognised the work they had done to ensure an inclusive environment, they said **'**The school has established a caring environment that pupils appreciate. Attendance has improved over time. Teachers implement the school's guidance on classroom routines consistently and pupils generally respect these expectations. There are also a set of adapted guidelines which support disadvantaged pupils to learn.'

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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

Some of the key commitments for the next year are below.

The Academy secured the SEN Inclusion Award in July 2025 and have worked incredibly hard to ensure robust systems are in place to support every student. As a result, the Academy is turning its attentions to the 'passive learning' in the classroom as this was identified by not only the Academy but by OFSTED in their inspection.

The Academy plans a review and overhaul of their teaching and learning practice which will then complement the incredible support given by their pastoral systems. In addition, the Academy has audited and evaluated the literacy levels of students using Bedrock Learning to reveal specific gaps and are focused on early intervention within the lower years to close gaps and ensure equity in access to education. This ensures a clear baseline from which to start the planned process. In addition, there are plans for literacy deep dives in all departments which will highlight strengths and areas to target relevant to each department.

To address the issue of 'passive learning' teaching staff received training on the new 'Active 8' model to reduce passive learning and ensure greater consistency across departments. Staff will be supported further through the CPD programme in place for the rest of the year led by Senior Leaders and Lead Practitioners who are also carrying out regular QA checks and highlighting good practice. There is also the opportunity for staff to showcase good practice by placing a sign on their door inviting other staff in to observe which only further demonstrates the supportive nature of the staff body and this initiative.

The Academy is also aiming to reduce the reliance on external Alternative Provision by putting in place a monitoring system that identifies need quickly and directs swift intervention. The system is called the Formulation Panel and consists of Principal, Vice Principal, Business Manager, AHT Mental health, AHT Inclusion and wellbeing. This panel will meet each Monday morning, and the coverage of Academy systems ensures not only no students will slip though the net, but swift support is actioned to avoid the immediate need for external provision or of that further down the line. The Academy structure ensures that all concerns are fed up to the panel, this could be from the fortnightly complex case meetings or team concerns from Departments.

Other commitments include the Lotus Pathway which will target those students with an EHCP on their transition into YR 7 and ensure they will not need alternative provision or change placements. The Academy aims to further expand the incredible work experience offer for Year 10 to give the opportunity to at least 80% of the cohort. They also want to increase the number of trips on offer to KS3 and ensure all students experience a school trip and positive school experience.

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Overview

The Highcrest Academy serves a varied catchment area attracting students from all cultural and social backgrounds that contribute to the school's strength and but also presents with challenges. The Academy prides itself on its community ethos and positive relationships between staff and students that underpins everything they do. The Headteacher said - 'Everything we do is for all students whether this is within lessons or as part of the extra-curricular offer, we are always asking ourselves can we do more to ensure we include all.' Adults conduct themselves in a respectful way to model student's responsible behaviour, aware that this contributes to young people character development.

The positive and respectful relationships between students and adults have a massive impact on decision making and their effectiveness. At this Academy, student voice translates into young people truly voicing their opinion without fear of repercussion and with expectation to be heard and acted on. One student commented "staff really listen to our ideas and make changes." The student went onto give the example of positive changes to the canteen queuing system as just one example.

Inclusive practice is at the very heart of teaching and learning at the school. As a school heavily built on positive relationships staff pride themselves on knowing their students, and families very well not just from an academic stance but personal and social one too. The new Formulation Panel ensures there is clear oversight on all areas of concern for students ensuring rapid and impactful interventions and support.

The alternative provision areas are incredibly well resourced and overseen by passionate highly trained staff. Examples of this are the dedicated interventions where students spend time out of mainstream to focus on Functional Skills and Literacy, with an English Specialist, but then also are in some mainstream lessons. This has led to a reduction in the use of external alternative provision but also increased attendance for students who had poor attendance or refused to come to school.

The adapted curriculum for different groups means that a lot of very vulnerable students are in school rather than being sat at home or worse. The isolation review has led to a decrease in its use and the number of repeat students. The system is very transparent, and students have to engage in the process to move back into mainstream as by doing this the anxiety of 'missing out on class work' is reduced as well as increased accountability and an understanding of why they are in isolation.

The teaching and learning CPD is driven by the Assistant Principal but in collaboration with key stakeholders including Lead Practitioners and Head of Department. Data collected from 'lesson visits' is used to highlight strengths and focus areas as well as signposting specific CPD, this ensures that the needs of all students are met.

Policies are geared to ensuring that relational and restorative practice for all students and this improves the overall experience for both staff and students. The monitoring systems are very robust and ensure student needs are quickly identified and the correct support is swiftly in place. Key examples of this include the Academy's Formulation Panel and the Complex Case Team.

Students are very proud of their school and feel their voice is both heard and valued. One Student reported back how on much support is on offer and 'the opportunities to grow not just academically but as a person through the development of key life skills. Students talk enthusiastically about the trips they go on and the array of extracurricular clubs that are available. Recognition is important and is valued by students and staff who talk positively about how their efforts are recognised and rewarded.

The 6th Form students really valued the many opportunities available for industry visits that help formulate or confirm their choices of career. Students really care for each other at this Academy; an example of this support is the 6th Form Team who help out each day at the breakfast club which is very well attended particularly by the most vulnerable students. One of the team said ''I just want to help as it gets really busy and I don't want other students to go without''.

The wellbeing of staff is very high on the agenda of the SLT, and this is really valued by staff who are then inspired to develop not only their students but themselves day in day out. One teacher said that they (Senior Leadership) are "very supportive and always check in following any issues." Another said that ''SLT are very approachable'' They spoke very highly of the 'work 9 paid 10 initiative' where all staff are given a day off timetable to use as they please every 2 weeks.

On a tour of the inclusion provision, the attitudes to learning are good and the support to different groups of students is outstanding. Students acknowledge that others need different support and are focused on their own learning allowing interventions to seamlessly take place in the same classroom. When asked how high does inclusion sit on the agenda, the Chair of Governors said, "we have put a lot of effort into ensuring we are a fully inclusive school" and that "following a review of teaching styles adaptions were quickly made to improve inclusive practice''.

Communication to parents is excellent with weekly bulletins that reinforce key events in addition to specific year group evening throughout the year to highlight what support they can offer their child to complements that of the Academy. All parents of children with SEN are given dedicated one to one meetings with the SENDCo and reports are colour coded to ensure they are clear and accessible to parents with EAL.

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 Craig Burrows

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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