Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project

School	Tow Law Millennium Primary School Wear Street Tow Law Bishop Auckland DL13 4LF
Head/Principal	Miss Nicola Mawson
IQM Lead	Mrs Helen McNally
Date of Review	8th July 2026
Assessor	Mrs Louise Stogdale

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group	Trail Blazers
Ambassador	Ms Annette Sowden
Next Meeting	TBC

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2025	22nd September 2025	Yes
Spring 2026	9th March 2026	Yes
Summer 2026	26th June 2026	Yes

The Impact of the Cluster Group

Tow Law Primary School continues to play an active and highly valued role within the IQM Cluster Group. Attendance at cluster meetings has remained excellent throughout the year, reflecting leaders' commitment to collaborative working and continuous school improvement. The school has embraced opportunities to both share its own inclusive practice and learn from the experiences of other settings, ensuring that new ideas are considered through the lens of its own community.

A significant focus this year has been the relationship between attendance, emotional wellbeing, and family engagement. Professional discussions around alternative provision, including the *'Pull Up a Chair and Meet the Parents'* initiative, prompted valuable reflection on how schools can further strengthen support for parents alongside pupils experiencing SEMH needs. These conversations reinforced the importance of early intervention, relationship-building and creating accessible opportunities for families to engage positively with school.

The concept of 'Belonging First' generated particularly meaningful discussion across the cluster. Schools reflected upon how pupils can become increasingly involved in shaping school life, recognising that genuine participation strengthens confidence, emotional wellbeing, and inclusion. This has further reinforced Tow Law Primary School's commitment to pupil leadership, ensuring that children continue to influence decision-making through pupil voice, leadership responsibilities, and meaningful consultation. Cluster discussions around poverty proofing encouraged leaders to revisit existing practice and consider whether decisions continue to be viewed through an equity lens. Although the school has embedded many poverty-proofing approaches over several years, this professional reflection has encouraged leaders to continually question what is expected of families and whether further barriers can be removed to ensure equitable access for all pupils.

Sharing practice with colleagues generated several ideas which will continue to inform future development. These include strengthening pupil, parent, and carer consultation processes by providing feedback summaries demonstrating how stakeholder views have influenced school improvement, further embedding celebration of neurodiversity through dedicated awareness events, and exploring the role of nurture provision alongside SEND funding arrangements to enhance support for vulnerable pupils.

The cluster has also provided opportunities to explore wider equality, diversity, and inclusion themes. Participation in the Show Racism the Red Card workshop encouraged leaders to reflect upon representation across the school environment, considering whether displays and curriculum resources fully reflect the diversity of modern Britain. Discussions also highlighted the potential influence of intergenerational attitudes and reinforced the importance of proactively promoting inclusion, equality and respect through the curriculum and wider school culture.

Professional dialogue has also supported curriculum development. Ideas shared by cluster colleagues have informed thinking around the progressive development of emotional vocabulary through the Zones of Regulation from Nursery to Upper Key Stage 2, the introduction of a monthly school values focus with Values Champions recognised through celebration assemblies, and the development of whole-school consistency in English curriculum delivery. Creative ideas such as introducing a free annual book fair, increasing the profile of the school's 'Dexter Bear' as a kindness ambassador and further promoting reading for pleasure have also provided valuable inspiration for future planning.

The cluster has continued to provide an important forum for strategic discussion around national developments, including initial consideration of the emerging SEND White Paper. Leaders have welcomed the opportunity to consider the potential implications collaboratively, agreeing to continue these discussions as further information becomes available and to share emerging practice across the network. Overall, the IQM Cluster continues to have a positive impact on Tow Law Primary School by providing a valuable professional network that encourages reflection, challenge, and innovation. The collaborative nature of the group enables leaders to evaluate existing practice, explore new approaches and continually strengthen the school's inclusive provision. The willingness to both contribute to and learn from the

expertise of others ensures that the benefits of cluster working extend beyond individual meetings and contribute meaningfully to ongoing school improvement.

Evidence

- IQM Flagship Review documentation.
- School website.
- Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) Report

Additional Activities

- Learning walk
- Observation of emotional regulation sessions

Discussions held with:

- Senior Leaders.
- Flagship Project Lead.
- Staff representatives
- Parent representatives
- Pupil representatives.
- Governors

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Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

Tow Law Primary School has made significant progress towards this Flagship Project objective. Leaders have successfully strengthened partnerships with a range of external agencies, invested in high-quality staff development, and further embedded a whole-school culture that places emotional wellbeing and mental health at the center of school life. The project has evolved beyond individual interventions to become an integrated approach that supports pupils, families, and staff alike.

The SENCO and Senior Mental Health Lead has attended termly Emotional Locality Forum meetings throughout the year, ensuring that the school remains fully informed of local and national developments. This has enabled the school to implement current best practice, including the introduction of Trauma Informed approaches and PACE training for all staff. Leaders have also engaged with County Durham's Valuing Neurodiversity programme, developing a clear understanding of the Needs Led Planning Tool and beginning its implementation with targeted pupils. Resources such as the Rainbow Guides have been shared with both staff and parents, further strengthening inclusive practice beyond the school gates.

Partnership work continues to be a considerable strength. Close collaboration with the Piece of Mind Team has enabled pupils to access timely mental health support through a wide range of preventative interventions. These have included transition support for Year 6 pupils, emotional wellbeing workshops, friendship programmes, the Five Ways to Wellbeing curriculum and parental engagement during community events such as the Christmas Fayre. The visible presence of external professionals within the school has normalised conversations around mental health whilst providing accessible support for both pupils and families.

The school's relationship with its Early Help Advisor has also developed further during the year. Whole staff training has ensured that every member of staff understands referral pathways and can confidently signpost families to appropriate support through Family Hubs and Families First services. Information is highly visible throughout school and is proactively shared with parents when appropriate, demonstrating the school's commitment to early intervention and reducing barriers before difficulties escalate.
The school's PSHE and RSHE curriculum has undergone significant development. Leaders have carefully reviewed provision to ensure that it reflects the needs of the community whilst remaining fully inclusive. Attendance at local authority network meetings has enabled the PSHE Lead to remain up to date with statutory guidance and emerging priorities. Key vocabulary has been embedded across the curriculum, ensuring greater consistency and progression in pupils' understanding of relationships, wellbeing, and personal development.

Preparation for the introduction of the revised RSHE curriculum has been exemplary. Extensive consultation has taken place with parents, governors, and staff, including face-to-face information sessions where families were able to explore resources and ask questions. Leaders have adopted an open and transparent approach throughout the implementation process, recognising that partnership with parents is fundamental to successful delivery. One parent commented that they now find comfort in speaking to

Mrs McNally following the consultation process, illustrating the trust that has been developed between home and school.

Support for pupils within the school day has continued to expand. The introduction of a dedicated sensory spaces has provided an effective environment for pupils requiring sensory regulation and is accessed daily. Soft starts and ends to the school day remain highly valued by families and pupils, enabling children to begin and end each day in a calm and regulated manner. Sensory circuits have also been introduced following lunchtime for identified pupils, further strengthening the school's graduated response to emotional regulation.

The school's intervention programme has become increasingly responsive and personalised. Intervention spaces are available across every classroom and support is carefully planned around individual need. Leaders have made a conscious decision to timetable many interventions during assembly times, ensuring that pupils no longer miss valuable classroom learning. Speech and language remain a key priority, alongside sensory regulation, precision teaching, and targeted pastoral support. Interventions are needs-led rather than programme-led, ensuring that provision remains flexible and responsive.

Professional development has been another notable strength throughout the year. All staff completed Blue Mental Health awareness training, alongside a comprehensive programme of SEND and inclusion training delivered through Durham County Council. Training on topics including Demand Avoidance, Blank Level Questioning and Attention Autism has subsequently been disseminated across the wider staff team, ensuring that professional learning benefits all colleagues rather than individual attendees. Current professional development is focused on embedding the revised RSHE curriculum, demonstrating the school's commitment to sustainable improvement.

Where required, pupils continue to access specialist counselling and bereavement support through external agencies. Although counselling provision through external organisations has not been required extensively this year, leaders have ensured that pathways remain established and accessible should need arise.

The school's commitment to promoting wellbeing extends beyond pupils to families and the wider community. Half-term newsletters provide information on mental health and wellbeing, whilst monthly online safety newsletters support parents in navigating contemporary challenges. Although the wellbeing section of the school website has been updated, leaders recognise that this remains an area for further development and have identified this as an ongoing priority.

The breadth of external support available to families has expanded considerably. Parents have accessed workshops on anxiety, sleep and other aspects of emotional wellbeing, alongside free parent-led Cognitive Behavioural Therapy opportunities. Enhanced transition arrangements for all Year 6 pupils and a strong focus on healthy lifestyles within the Early Years further demonstrate the school's preventative approach. Parents receive termly calendars in advance to support family planning and are regularly invited into school to develop their understanding of children's needs through workshops and information events.

Personal development opportunities continue to enrich pupils' wider experiences. The catering provider has actively consulted pupils on school menus, ensuring that pupil voice influences decision-making. External visitors including the Police, Fire Service and RNLI have broadened pupils' understanding of personal safety and citizenship, whilst opportunities to participate in activities such as rugby and dance have developed confidence, resilience, and aspirations through exposure to new experiences.

Leaders have demonstrated exceptional sensitivity when supporting vulnerable pupils. Children requiring support with personal care or toileting are treated with dignity and compassion, ensuring that no child experiences embarrassment or shame. This reflects the school's deeply embedded culture of inclusion and respect.

Floor books provide a rich record of the school's PSHE curriculum and wider personal development offer. Pupils value these as tangible evidence of children's learning and experiences. Leaders have also prepared thoroughly for future statutory requirements relating to parental access to curriculum materials, demonstrating proactive planning and transparency.

Communication with families has continued to strengthen throughout the year. Leaders have increased the school's social media presence to celebrate success and keep families informed. Senior leaders remain highly visible at the school gate each morning, building trusting relationships with parents through regular informal conversations. Families are invited into school for reassurance before key events such as residential visits, whilst relaxed Stay and Play sessions and Reception transition meetings provide valuable opportunities for new families to build confidence and establish relationships with staff.

Celebration remains central to the school's culture. Nursery Graduation, Sports Day, Celebration Assemblies, family assemblies, school fairs, Year 6 Leavers' events and religious celebrations all actively involve families and strengthen community cohesion. Parents report that they "feel welcomed, informed and included in school life." One parent commented that leaders "always want parents to feel included", whilst others described the school as "community orientated" and "open". These views reflect the school's sustained commitment to genuine partnership working.

Overall, the Flagship Project has had a significant and measurable impact on the wellbeing of pupils, families, and staff. External partnerships have strengthened, staff expertise has increased considerably, and inclusive practice has become further embedded across every aspect of school life. Leaders continue to demonstrate a proactive and reflective approach, evaluating provision carefully and adapting practice to meet the changing needs of their community. The school's work exemplifies the principles of the IQM Flagship Award, with emotional wellbeing viewed not as an additional initiative but as an integral element of high-quality inclusive education.

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Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project

To develop and implement a comprehensive well-being and mental health support framework, aimed at promoting emotional resilience, early identification of mental health concerns, and timely, inclusive interventions.

During the next phase of the Flagship Project, Tow Law Primary School will continue to strengthen its whole-school approach to wellbeing and mental health, ensuring that the highly inclusive culture established across the school is sustained. Leaders are committed to embedding a comprehensive framework that enables every pupil to feel safe, valued, understood, and empowered to achieve both emotionally and academically. The project will focus on sustaining effective partnerships, further developing staff expertise, and ensuring that pupils and families continue to receive timely, responsive, and personalised support.

The school will continue to work closely with a wide range of external agencies to enhance support for pupils and families. The annual **Piece of Mind** partnership plan will remain central to the school's graduated response to SEMH needs, alongside continued engagement with the Early Help Advisor, SENDIASS, Family Hub services and Durham County Council Emotional Wellbeing Locality Forums. Attendance at termly SENCO and Emotional Wellbeing Network meetings will ensure that leaders remain informed of emerging local priorities and best practice. The school will also continue to engage with the Inclusion Network, accessing professional development opportunities and contributing to collaborative work, including the development of pupil inclusion credits.

A key priority will be the successful implementation of the new RSHE Scheme of Work from September 2026. The revised curriculum will strengthen the school's provision for Relationships, Sex and Health Education while incorporating an enhanced citizenship focus within the wider PSHE curriculum. Leaders will monitor the impact of the new curriculum through regular pupil voice activities, ensuring that children continue to feel that the curriculum reflects their experiences and supports their emotional wellbeing. Staff will continue to attend termly Durham County Council PSHE network meetings to maintain compliance with statutory guidance and share effective practice.

Parents will remain active partners throughout the implementation process. Annual face-to-face RSHE consultation events will continue to provide opportunities for families to explore curriculum resources, ask questions and contribute their views. Where appropriate, targeted follow-up consultations or small working groups will be established to ensure that all parents feel informed, supported, and able to engage confidently with the curriculum.

The school will continue to refine its graduated response to SEMH needs through carefully targeted interventions. Leaders will explore the feasibility of introducing Profiling to further strengthen early identification and assessment of pupils' social, emotional, and mental health needs. Building on the success of existing provision, a dedicated Key Stage 1 sensory space will be developed to complement the established Key Stage 2 sensory area. Sensory circuits, soft starts and ends to the school day and flexible approaches to playtimes and lunchtimes will continue to be adapted in response

to the needs of each cohort, ensuring that provision remains responsive rather than routine.

Professional development will remain a significant priority. Staff will receive ongoing CPD to embed the revised statutory RSHE requirements and further strengthen confidence in delivering high-quality PSHE provision. Continued participation in professional learning opportunities will further enhance inclusive practice across the school, with learning disseminated to the wider staff team to maximise impact. Leaders will also develop one-page pupil profiles to support effective transition between year groups, ensuring that individual strengths, needs, and successful strategies are shared before the start of each academic year.

The school will continue to strengthen the understanding of wellbeing and mental health across the whole community. The school website will be regularly updated to provide accessible information about available support, intervention pathways, and curriculum developments. Monthly online safety newsletters will continue to support parents in responding to emerging online risks, whilst the PSHE and Computing curricula will be reviewed in light of the proposed social media restrictions anticipated nationally during Spring 2027. This will ensure that curriculum content remains current, relevant, and responsive to the changing digital landscape.

Through these agreed actions, Tow Law Primary School will continue to build upon the excellent foundations already established. The next phase of the Flagship Project will focus on sustaining high-quality inclusive practice, strengthening collaborative partnerships, and ensuring that emotional wellbeing remains central to every aspect of school life. By embedding these developments into everyday practice, the school will continue to provide a nurturing, responsive, and ambitious learning environment where every child and family is supported to flourish.

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Overview

As you enter Tow Law Primary School, situated at one of the highest points in County Durham, there is an immediate sense of warmth, belonging, and inclusivity. Despite this being a year of change, the school's long-serving leadership team has successfully maintained its inclusive ethos by listening carefully to staff, parents, and the wider community. Their willingness to reflect on feedback and respond positively has ensured that inclusion remains at the heart of school improvement. As one stakeholder commented, *"There's a lovely feeling when I walked in,"* a statement which perfectly captures the atmosphere that permeates the school.

The school's commitment to developing pupil leadership is immediately evident. Children are empowered to take on meaningful responsibilities through a wide range of leadership roles, including Wellbeing Champions, School Council representatives, Headteacher Assistants, Sports Leaders, Librarians, Peer Mentors and Green Leaders. These achievements are celebrated prominently alongside displays recognising British Values, Young Carers, pupil leadership, academic success, and pastoral achievements. This sends a powerful message that every child is valued, recognised, and encouraged to contribute to school life.

A clear priority throughout the school is ensuring that children feel safe, happy, and able to thrive. Leaders have thoughtfully removed barriers to participation through practical approaches such as allowing children to have their own water bottles and maintaining flexibility around uniform expectations. During the week of the assessment, the school was immersed in its transition programme, with pupils confidently spending time in their new classes while Year 6 pupils were successfully engaging in enhanced transition activities at their secondary schools. Leaders have also planned additional safety sessions ahead of the summer holidays, demonstrating their proactive approach to supporting pupils both in and beyond school.

Partnerships with parents are a significant strength. Leaders have actively sought parental views throughout the year and have responded positively to feedback. Families are supported with dignity and respect through initiatives such as providing school uniforms for the following academic year in an accessible and sensitive manner. Educational visits are subsidised wherever possible to ensure that financial circumstances do not prevent children from accessing valuable enrichment experiences. Flexible start and end-of-day arrangements further support pupils' emotional wellbeing and provide reassurance for families.

Parents consistently reported that they feel listened to and taken seriously by staff. They particularly value the school's flexible and personalised approach to meeting children's needs, recognising the benefits of soft starts to the day and reduced timetables where appropriate to ensure successful engagement in learning. Parents appreciate that staff understand behaviour as communication and recognise that behaviours often arise from additional needs rather than children simply "being naughty". They described staff as solution-focused, using positive approaches such as distraction techniques and personalised strategies to help children regulate successfully.

The strength of these relationships is reflected in the comments shared by parents. One parent stated, *"I swear by this school,"* while another explained, *"I have been welcomed into Tow Law and made to feel welcome from the start."* Parents consistently described the school as a genuine community where staff work in partnership with families through openness, honesty, and mutual respect.

The school environment reflects its inclusive philosophy. Playtimes are calm and purposeful, with children taking responsibility for shared equipment, demonstrating respect for their surroundings, and showing pride in their school. Personal development is a significant strength and is celebrated through initiatives such as Star of the Week, Dojo rewards developed through pupil voice and the extensive range of leadership opportunities available to children.

The wider provision available to pupils further demonstrates the school's commitment to equity. A daily breakfast club is available to all children, wraparound care supports working families, and nursery children can attend a tea-time club. After-school clubs are free of charge, open to everyone and enjoy consistently high levels of participation, ensuring that every child has access to wider opportunities regardless of circumstance. A free healthy snack is also provided every day, further reducing barriers for families. Leaders have thoughtfully adapted learning spaces to meet the changing needs of each cohort. Sensory breakout areas, regulation spaces, and Lego Therapy support pupils' emotional regulation, while Zones of Regulation provide a consistent whole-school approach. Fun Fridays and dedicated PSHE lessons further strengthen the school's personal development curriculum and ensure that wellbeing remains a visible priority throughout school life.

The assessment highlighted how exceptionally well leaders and staff know their pupils as individuals. Provision is continually reviewed and adapted to meet emerging needs, with sensory spaces evolving alongside each cohort. Pupils proudly wear different jumpers to identify their leadership responsibilities, reinforcing both inclusion and belonging. External agencies and visitors regularly work alongside the school to broaden aspirations, provide positive role models, and enrich children's experiences. Relationships across the school are characterised by mutual respect, kindness, and care. Staff unanimously described the school's journey of improvement as significant. They spoke positively about the inclusive culture, commenting that children are accepting of one another and that colleagues are supportive, uplifting and genuinely work as one team. Staff feel listened to and involved in decision-making, citing recent developments in the behaviour policy as an example of collaborative leadership where decisions are not simply made for them but with them.

The school's nurturing ethos is particularly evident through the work of the reception team, who know families exceptionally well. Their open, honest, and compassionate approach enables them to reduce barriers for families, often simply by offering a listening ear or practical support. Staff consistently described the school as nurturing, welcoming, community-focused, close-knit, safe and "like a family". One member of staff summarised their approach simply by saying they will do "whatever they can do" to support families. They know every child and family well and place relationships at the heart of everything they do.

Governors demonstrate a strong understanding of the school's inclusive vision and provide effective challenge and support. Inclusion is a standing agenda item at their termly meetings, ensuring that equality of opportunity remains central to strategic decision-making. Governors recognise that staff continually adapt provision to meet individual needs so that every child is given the same opportunities regardless of ability. They praised the way reasonable adjustments are made sensitively so that children never feel singled out and highlighted the willingness of staff to undertake additional professional development and consistently "go the extra mile for pupils and families". Governors described interventions as being framed positively, with a clear focus on encouraging children to develop confidence and self-belief. As one governor commented, staff continually *"encourage children to believe in themselves."* They also recognised the generosity and support shown by the local community towards the school.

Pupil voice strongly reflects this positive culture. Children describe staff as "kind, supportive and approachable," knowing they can speak to any adult if they have a concern. They celebrate opportunities to attend festivals, educational visits and transition activities and understand how sensory spaces help them regulate their emotions. They value their leadership responsibilities and understand that many of these opportunities have arisen through pupil voice. Children appreciate having "lots to play with" at breaktimes and spoke positively about the sensory spaces within classrooms, explaining how these help them to regulate their emotions. Emotional regulation is explicitly taught throughout the school day, equipping pupils with valuable lifelong strategies.

When asked to describe their school, pupils chose the words *"special," "entertaining," "helpful," "unique"* and *"kind."* These words capture the school's ethos perfectly. Governors further reflected that children leave Tow Law Primary School as increasingly independent young people who are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They also recognised that leaders actively involve children in decision-making, ensuring that pupils genuinely have their say and understand that their voices matter.

Throughout the assessment there was overwhelming consistency between the views of leaders, staff, governors, parents, and pupils. All stakeholders described a school where inclusion is lived rather than simply promoted. Tow Law Primary School exemplifies an inclusive culture where relationships, wellbeing and belonging underpin every aspect of school life. Leaders demonstrate a deep understanding of their community and continually adapt provision to meet the needs of every learner. Inclusion is not viewed as an initiative but as the foundation upon which the school operates.

The school's caring ethos, responsive leadership, strong partnerships with families and unwavering commitment to removing barriers ensure that every child is given every opportunity to succeed. As stakeholders repeatedly described the school as *"caring, nurturing, welcoming and kind,"* it is perhaps the pupils' own description that provides the most fitting conclusion. The word they chose most often to describe their school was simply **"special"-** a word that encapsulates the distinctive and highly inclusive nature of Tow Law Primary School.

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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: Mrs Louise Stogdale

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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Joe McCann MBA NPQH

Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd