



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



School Name: Exning Primary School

Head/Principal: Mr. James Clark
Ms. Emma Hardy

IQM Lead: Ms. Ruth Clifford-Turner

Date of Review: 15th July 2025

Assessor: Ms Hazel J Simmons

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group MADIE B

Ambassador Ms Helen Harris

Next Meeting

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2023	18 th October 2023	Yes
Spring 2024	14 th February 2024	Yes
Summer 2024	21 st May 2024	Yes
Autumn 2024	13 th November 2024	Yes
Spring 2025	3 rd April 2025	Yes

Summer 2025

Evidence:

- IQM Self Evaluation report
- School Development Plan
- Pupil Premium statement
- School website
- Trust website
- Learning walk and learning environment



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- Performance Data (published)
- Ofsted report
- CPD schedule
- Headteacher's annual report for Governors
- School news
- Parent survey results
- Pupil survey comments
- A variety of written endorsements from Suffolk LA, and local employers

Meetings Held (in person and virtual) with:

- Governors
- CEO of the Trust Director
- Headteacher
- Trust Director of Primary
- Deputy Head / SENCo / IQM Co-ordinator
- Teachers
- Pupils
- Teaching Assistants
- Parents
- Suffolk LA Inclusion Leaders



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Evaluation of Targets for last 12 Months

Target 1: To work with a group of schools, from primary through to further education, with Exning Primary School taking a significant Leadership role in the expansion of the primary offer across the EET Academy Trust. This will take account of all age sectors and specialist provisions, facilitating an inclusive culture in each school and ensuring that all families feel supported and welcomed.

This target has been achieved and, as the Trust grows, will expand and continue. To date, Exning have begun a programme of curriculum and resource development with special schools in the Trust and are supporting their SLT more broadly.

Work has been completed supporting other schools to join the Trust from September 2025 and the school is also preparing formal bids for two new SEND units on site, and all that entails.

Further work is being done in respect of a project to create with to housing and education offers for post-16 student leavers currently attending Trust colleges.

Exning Leaders are now key members of the termly governance meetings at EEG, working with colleagues from all sectors of the Trust to develop strategy, policy, and procedures, with an inclusive focus.

Next Steps:

- To continue to build capacity at all levels to enable effective support of other Trust schools.
- To work collaboratively with schools joining the Trust, including the SEND school group already in the Trust.

Target 2: To work closely with Norfolk, Essex, Suffolk, Teacher Training (NESST), Anglia Ruskin, and the Cambridge University Faculty of Education to ensure that inclusion in all its forms is given the highest priority in the teacher training programs.

This target has been achieved and was evidenced during the review. It included attending NESST steering group meetings, teaching Cambridge University PGCE English students and delivery more widely of sessions focused on inclusion sessions.

Senior Leaders have given their time to participate in interviews for trainees looking to join the PGCE NESTT programme and the BEd programme for ARU, as well as host student placements at the Hive SEND unit and a BEd student in his first-year placement.

Next Step:

- Leaders will continue to teach on all these teacher training courses. In addition, continue to collaborate with NESTT to design and offer a SEND-specific teaching



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qualification, participate on trainee interview on the panels and host student placements for NESTT, as well as offer a specialist placement with UEA in 2025/26.

Target 3: To Complete a whole-school development system, bringing staff into new Leadership roles so that the existing Leadership team can take on strategic outward-facing roles.

Senior Leaders have completed a range of formal qualifications including National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) and NASENCo qualification.

Roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined and a comprehensive plan of action established for 2025 / 2026.

Whilst key components have been communicated to staff, further formal clarification and organisation chart is required.

Next Steps:

- Formalise, and publish to all staff, the specific responsibilities assigned to each SLT member for the upcoming academic year.

Target 4: By invitation, a school Leader at Exning Primary will partner with the Suffolk County Council Children and Family Services Team to support and improve the development of their systems, provisions, and outcomes for families.

This work has already received a commendation from the county's Assistant Director of Inclusion, who wrote to the Deputy Head, 'to officially thank you for your contribution to the SEND improvement board'.

The target is achieved, and evidence was provided during this assessment, plus appreciation was expressed during discussions with members of the local authority.

Next Steps:

- The school will continue this work and to support the local authority, particularly in respect of auditing EHCP outcomes.



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Agreed Flagship Project / Targets for next 12 Months.

Project Title: From Behaviour to Relationships: A Whole-School Approach to Emotional Wellbeing at Exning Primary School.

Project Aim: To review and transform the current behaviour policy into a Relationships Policy that reflects a trauma-informed, therapeutic, and relational ethos, supporting the emotional wellbeing and inclusion of all pupils.

Sub Target 1: Redesign the Behaviour Policy

Comments:

- Ensure the policy focuses on connection, understanding, and repair.
- Embed restorative practices and relational language.
- Ensure alignment with Therapeutic Thinking, Thrive, and Trauma-Informed principles.

Sub Target 2: Implement Therapeutic Thinking Model

Comments:

- Co-Headteacher to complete Therapeutic Thinking training.
- Use support from SES Whole School Inclusion Team to cascade training and embed strategies.

Introduce key strategies including:

- Pro-social language and scripts.
- Emotion coaching and regulation plans.
- Analysis of unmet needs behind behaviours.
- Repair and reflection processes instead of punitive consequences.

Sub Target 3: Embed Thrive Practice

Comments:

- Current Thrive specialist to continue as Thrive Lead Practitioner.
- Use Thrive-Online to assess pupils' social and emotional development and create action plans.

Link Thrive's developmental and trauma-sensitive approach with Therapeutic Thinking by:

- Creating safe, predictable environments
- Using play, creativity, and arts to support emotional expression
- Building secure adult-child relationships as the foundation for learning

Sub Target 4: Integrate Trauma-Informed Schools Practice

Comments:

Use recent expert training to embed trauma-informed principles:

- Safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.
- Understanding behaviour as communication of unmet need.
- Staff training on ACEs and the impact of trauma on brain development.
- Whole-school culture of compassion and co-regulation.

Sub Target 5: Communicate with parents about practical strategies they can use at home to support their child's emotional wellbeing, reinforcing trauma-informed practices beyond the classroom.

Comments:

- Train up an additional adult so that more children can access sessions.
- Begin to deliver parent sessions through 'Hamish and Milo'.
- Continue to seek opportunities for parents for external support for strategies to support children's wellbeing at home.



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The Impact of the Cluster Group (with details of the impact of last three meetings)

From the day at Castle Hill School, the OPAL programme that focuses on improving the quality of playtimes by transforming the outdoor environment into zoned areas, giving pupils access to a wide range of different sports and play opportunities was inspiring. Castle Hill demonstrated the improvements seen in pupil well-being, physical activity, and behaviour.

Exning also gained actionable strategies to further adapt the delivery of the ELS phonics scheme within The Hive.

They found the discussions around the implementation of a whole-school sensory diet, which could ensure that every pupil benefits from a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, of great interest.

At Northgate High School, although the setting was quite different (being a large secondary setting) the rich programme provided offered many ideas for curriculum blending and building in links to cultural awareness topics that will be very helpful in their work across the all-through new Trust context, while the social context of the school, being very different to that of Exning, offered a host of ideas for supportive programmes that can be shared across the Trust. It was also of interest to hear about a 6th-form setting that was focused on academic achievement.

In addition, the mutual sharing opportunity provided by these days was felt to be of value.



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Overview

Exning Primary is a vibrant and inclusive school, with high ambitions for pupils, staff, and the development of education practice more broadly. The school motto is simply, 'Persevere, Shine, Be Happy' which clearly blends the aspirations to create a hard-working environment and maintain a joyful environment.

In 2024, the school, as founder members, joined the innovative Eastern Education Trust (EET), which now comprises educational settings from primary education through to college and adulthood, aiming to provide 'wraparound support tailored to each individual' and, 'foster a lifelong love of learning which drives progression and prosperity for every student', within their respective communities. This all-age and all-ability breadth has enabled them to provide unique insight and advice to the Local Authority. The Headteacher of Exning has taken on the role of Director of Primary in EET and is currently assisting other schools join the Trust.

Whilst the Trust celebrates the individual characteristics of each school, encouraging them to operate autonomously so that they are able to respond to the specific needs of their settings, pupils and families, Exning are now also able to take advantage of the opportunity to meet, peer-review and collaborate with colleagues across the group, providing them with access to specialist interest projects and career support.

The number of pupils who hold Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) or require other Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support is high, compared to the national average, and thus the excellent Key Stage 2 results are noteworthy, with significantly higher numbers of pupils than the national and county averages, meeting the expected standards in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2.

However, always seeking to drive pupil outcomes forward, the school is seeking ways to refine the measures used to identify small steps progress nuances that will help pupils to maximise their attainment. Thus, Sonar, a predictive pupil progress system that provides advanced formative and summative assessment, has been introduced so that timely, impactful interventions can be implemented quickly.

Attendance is also excellent and has improved further this past year.

The site covers a large area, featuring a variety of different learning and leisure spaces, including a Forest School and SEND Inclusion Hub. Pupils navigate the corridors and public spaces calmly and with polite respect for each other, as was observed during break-time changeovers during this assessment.

At the beginning of the school day, families are warmly greeted at the school gate by School Leaders as pupils positively rush to get to their classrooms. Parents were keen to share their experiences of the school with the assessor. One commented that, "it's a phenomenal place, a family. All the staff here take the time to get to know us and, in the morning, the Deputy just has to look at us to pick up if we need some help." Another parent described the exceptional support she received in obtaining an EHCP for her son. His autism was initially identified by his classroom teacher, and now, with personalised, reasonable adjustments in place, he is able to successfully participate in the main

classroom, despite his challenges. Another described staff as being, “miracle workers” able to create strong relationships with parents, who absolutely know that the school, “is on our side.” Schemes such as the school’s own (confidential), ‘Cost of Living Support’ programme, which is not limited to pupils receiving FSM, contribute to this sentiment.

During this assessment it was clear that school puts the needs of children above any specified process, willing to advocate for families, as in the case of a pupil in the Hive inclusion unit, whose urgent needs the school recognised, pleading his case with the LA placement panel, even before an EHCP had been prescribed, his parent asserting that this exemplified the school’s genuinely holistic approach and kindness. The parent of a child who joined in January 2025, following difficult experiences in other schools, was keen to share her experience and how, “incredibly grateful” she was, asserting that the school’s impact on her son (who has Autism and communication challenges) and the impact on the family had been significant and that, “the change in him has been truly remarkable.”

Parent voice is actively encouraged. Families of SEND pupils are exceptionally well supported with a range of activities, including a fortnightly coffee morning where parents can share information and offer mutual support. A SEND specific parent forum is also held every term (as well as the whole school Forum). Innovatively, each class in the school has a ‘parent rep’ and their own class WhatsApp group, used to gather questions and suggestions from everyone to take to the Forums or share with the school, thereby providing a communications channel for parents unable to make direct representation. A recent survey of parents whose children attend the SEND unit in school shows that 100% of all parents feel that their child is making progress and that they would recommend the provision.

As a result of the formation of Eastern Education Trust, significant change has taken place within the leadership structure of the school during the past year, including Senior Leaders participating in additional outreach work. However, parents and Governors report that the transition has been, “managed seamlessly and the development of leadership internally has been efficient and effective.” The Chair of Governors described how the school has, ‘its arms around the community and doesn’t just stop at families’, which has given it high public standing. The Trust has established Strategic Conferences for Governors and Leaders across the Trust, and Exning Primary is regarded as a centre of excellence and are playing a major advisory role across other schools, particularly the group of SEND specialists incorporated into the group.

Exning Primary are aware of the rising numbers of pupils with SEMH challenges entering the school. Their research to seek possible solutions led them to ‘Hamish and Milo’, a comprehensive emotions curriculum that includes intervention packages and graduated resources. Exning’s leadership worked with Suffolk LA to access funding from the DfE (Delivering Better Value in SEND scheme) so that the programme could be made available to any Suffolk school at a subsidised price, evidencing their ethos to share information and support as widely as possible. The SENCo explained this wellbeing intervention at a county SEND meeting and created an information video for the LA to distribute, raising awareness of the programme and how to access the DBV scheme. Exning’s SENCo is now a key member of the DBV steering group.



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'Hamish and Milo' is being used at Exning, and a lead staff member trained to work with small groups of identified students over a ten-week programme. The results to date have been very encouraging, with pupils able to express their emotions and develop greater empathy towards others. A pupil who had completed the programme explained how she "used to get angry" but had now learnt, "ways to calm and sort things." She also appreciated the small group methodology as this had helped her see she was not alone and could openly share her feelings. A feedback survey of pupils who had engaged with the programme illustrates the impact on children, who say they, "feel happier and more in control" and confident, whereas before they felt they were, "struggling in class."

In addition, the school's 'Hamish and Milo' lead has delivered training to parents and runs drop-in sessions, supplying free resources that can be used at home and links to sites where additional, parent focused, information can be found. Parents report positively about 'Hamish and Milo', stating that they have seen increased levels of confidence and maturity in their children. The school is also consulting with SEND schools in the Trust regarding assisting them to implement the programme to particularly aid in the identification of presenting behaviours, underlying needs and inform signposting for EHCP, SEN and PEP reviews. In another initiative, the school is also working with Essex Education Psychology services, helping them develop small steps skills statements, particularly in maths.

During the learning walk, the assessor witnessed pupils engrossed in a broad range of activities, many of which were experiential and required high levels of collaboration and teachers' passion for teaching shone through. In a Year-3 classroom, small groups of students were discussing their individual DT projects, which had included them creating 3D versions of a place of their choice, ranging from a holiday park to a hairdressing salon. Pupils enthusiastically explained their designs to the assessor. In a literacy class, pupils listened with rapt attention as a teacher expertly modelled reading and shed a tear as she described a sad situation in the novel. Upon entering a Year-2 classroom, pupil Meet and Greet Leaders approached the assessor to describe the learning in hand: similar levels of engagement and calmness permeated the site, including in the specialist HIVE classroom, where some pupils were treated to a participative Attention Autism session whilst others explored the sensory based, continuous learning provision provided. This provision has been a great success and the school, recognising a gap for pupils who need additional support, would be keen to further support the local authority by extending the HIVE with a Key Stage 2 communications and interaction specialist unit.

Pupils at Exning develop important life skills via a plethora of activities woven into school life. Leadership opportunities for pupils abound and the importance of shared responsibility is notable. The Head Boy and Girl described their fundraising on behalf of 'The Sick Children's Trust' and explained how pupils select the charity via a process of nominations made by school councillors that are then voted for by the whole school population. All pupils in Year-4 (irrespective of financial circumstance) attend an annual residential camp where they learn about the environment and participate in physical skills adventures, such as caving. One student spoke proudly of his involvement in being part of a lesson about map-making, observed by Senior Leaders from the London Grid for Learning to enhance the adults understanding of teaching with a new technology.



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Significant numbers of pupils are members of scouting groups, aided by the school permitting these clubs to be run on the school premises after school. Not only does this enrich the wrap-around offer to pupils but it engenders community cohesion and brings pupils into contact with young people from other educational settings to broaden their social experience. Furthermore, the schools pen-pal relationship with an orphanage in Uganda is cherished and is a relationship the school hopes to further develop. During a meeting with the assessor, enthusiastic pupils shared details of numerous activities they had enjoyed during the year, including a Bikeability safety course, Rock Steady band concerts, meeting their local MP, keeping animals on the school-site and getting involved in local events, such as meeting the King and Queen during a recent royal visit to the town.

In addition, the annual 'Valuing Ourselves and Others' week has been enhanced to include both a career skills programme supported by parents as experts, local business, and a college. It also now includes well-being sessions. It is of note that as well as accomplishments resulting from school organised events for teams and groups, the school ensures that individuals who achieve success in activities inside and outside of school are acknowledged. This year's achievements included being short-listed for the National Mediation Awards' (peer), and an Exning pupil winning a competition to design a new coin, the prize consisting of a visit from the Royal Mint and funding for additional Maths resources. One pupil summed up his experience of Exning Primary, asserting that, "this is a unique and diverse place."

Cultural capital and education enhancement visits to external places of interest are abundant. This past year they have included a VR experience at the VR Lab within Eastern College (a member of the Trust), as part of British Science Week and a particularly charming event devised by the school that involved pupils interviewing residents at a local care home. Inspired by the tales they were told regarding the past careers and leisure achievements of the resident senior citizens, pupils then created individual comics for each of them, presenting them as Superheroes: a truly positive, multi-generation project.

The school's use of Chrome Books, as reported last year, continues, helping pupils develop the digital skills that will be required in their adult worlds, and also assisting them to develop necessary resilience and know-how to manage the potentially harmful effects of technology: an ever more important safeguarding matter. Furthermore, the access facilities these computers provide ensure pupils are able to maximise their attainment. The exceptional practice at Exning is in the provision of free devices to every pupil from Year 2 upwards, ensuring what the school refers to as, 'Digal Dignity' for everyone: this is a truly inclusive feature of classroom practice that the Trust plans to roll out across all schools.

The CEO of the Trust explained to the IQM assessor how enriching it has been to share Primary expertise with Post-16 organisations, and their pedagogical philosophy is what is driving them forward, cooperatively focused on developing ways to teach young people how to learn rather than merely focus on subjects. Exning Primary are regarded as, 'a central pillar' in the Trust's vision and are helping to, 'shape inclusive classroom practice and curriculum alignment', particularly within the specialist schools who have joined Eastern Education Group. He further explained how instrumental, "the amazing



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team” at Exning had been in refining the Trust’s skills to thoroughly embed inclusion for all, and how they were collectively, determined to ensure that, irrespective of background, there was, “no glass ceiling for children” and how highly regarded the school was across the Trust. He explained how, irrespective of age, learning stage or ability, the mission of EET educators, including those at Exning Primary, was to develop, “the life chances for young people.”

The county’s Whole School Inclusion Specialist, spoke to the assessor about her work with the school, noting how, “the school gives so much of their time and energy supporting and advising the Local Authority,” including playing a key part in developing Suffolk’s inclusion framework, participating in inclusion forums and assisting with the county referral process. She was also grateful for Exning’s willingness to support other schools, and host visits from SEND Leaders. She went on to describe the school’s relationship with families, stating that, “every child and every parent in the school community feels they have a caring hand on their heart.” A senior member of Suffolk’s Specialist Education Services department told the assessor that, Exning School is incredibly popular with parents, as their reputation for having, “strong leadership and a whole school culture for inclusion” is well known, “across the Suffolk SEND Community.” Their reputation has even reached Parliament with their MP writing to state that he was, “a huge fan of this school and its amazing team.”

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 pursue Flagship School status. I therefore recommend that the school moves to 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: Ms Hazel J Simmons

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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