



## Report on IQM Inclusive School Award



**School Name:** Whaley Thorns Community Primary School and Nursery

**School Address:** Portland Road  
Langwith  
Mansfield  
NG20 9HB

**Head/Principal:** Annette Lupton

**IQM Lead:** Hannah Slack

**Assessment Date (s):** 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021

**Assessor:** Ian Lowe

### Sources of Evidence:

Evidence for the review was gathered from interviews with the Principal, Vice Principal, SENCO, CEO Team Education MAT, Learning Mentors, Governors, staff, children, and parents. An evaluation of the progress and impact of IQM Action Plans and documentary scrutiny informed the review. The school has a thorough Action Plan for the coming year and has accounted for all the actions undertaken evidenced in their IQM self-evaluation.



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### Overall Evaluation

Whaley Thorns Community Primary School and Nursery is part of the TEAM Education Academy Trust. It is in the City of Mansfield. It is a one-form entry school with 150 on roll, including the Nursery provision. It is situated discreetly in a modernised 1950's building. Pupil Premium within the academy is slightly above the national average at 33%. The school is 89% White British.

However, there is nothing discreet about the inclusive practice that children and families experience at Whaley Thorns. As a family of schools, they believe 'Together Everyone Achieves More' and both children and parents are falling over themselves to reiterate this. This was apparent on arrival, going straight from meeting the SENCO to walking, or for those who are younger running, the mile before school started - the children told me that they 'Love it'. To see children supporting peers and mixing across the school was heart-warming!

TEAM Education vision states 'Trust schools offer nurturing, inclusive learning environments, led by teachers who collaborate as a TEAM together to meet the needs of each and every student. Through our high-quality curriculum offer and embracing the latest technology, our children and young people will have the best possible foundation to be successful in their future lives, jobs, and relationships. The 'TOGETHER' values are explicit across the school.' Children and parents fondly talk about how the staff and leaders support them in their learning journey. One parent stated...'Nothing is too much for the school...children are all treated as individuals.'

Whaley Thorns Community Primary School is a school where consistent, high expectations of children have transferred into good and improving outcomes for all. The Principal greets with a warm, welcoming smile, it is obvious she models a positive mind set behaviour in all that she does. She knows each child exceptionally well and talks passionately about how the school is improving their life chances. Her leadership sets the tone, and this care and kindness underpins the school. Whaley Thorns is a school that is driving forward and knows where it wants to go! It is a very welcoming and supportive school, with a relentless determination to provide the very best education for every child, academically and holistically. Children are firmly at the centre of everything, for all staff members, with a focus on creating a culture of success through a positive climate for learning and aspiration.

Whaley Thorns is passionate in all that it does and articulates its aims and objectives clearly. The school believes that the quality of education a child receives empowers their future choices and life chances and pride themselves on giving each child in their care the best experiences so that they can aspire to achieve. The Headteacher and SENCO have an unwavering commitment to achieving and maintaining the highest standards and an ambition to provide a holistic educational experience for every child. The Leadership commitment in directing SEND practice and inclusivity is testimony to the understanding that all children can achieve. Systems and practices have been put in place to support the most vulnerable children so that they have a sense of belonging and trust, and are given the skills, attributes, and responsibility to take ownership of their own personal development and make appropriate choices. This includes children being responsible for pupil well-being as 'Pupil Listeners' to 'Litter Pickers.' As a result, there is high engagement with children because, as the Principal states 'the whole staff are speaking to them properly', and as a result they feel valued and respected. Children can self-direct and are able to take themselves off to self-regulate. Children are given a personalised



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curriculum, so that they are actively involved in their own academic or nurture development. The school places high importance on the mental health, of both staff and children, which is fundamental to how they work. 'Mental Health' is not seen as an 'add on,' by either children or staff. This is evidenced in both pupils and staff expressing how well the school supports them and how safe they feel.

Whaley Thorn believes in harnessing children's unique skills across all areas of the curriculum, in addition to their life skills and tailoring learning to best support their future goals. This is evidenced by the values that children are not only able to articulate, but also displayed in their actions. One child who was volunteering at lunchtime stated. 'I love helping the younger children, I enjoy helping them because it is a kind thing to do, and we are a kind school.' The ambassadors are used as a voice for children in their class. Any ideas are then discussed and shared with the class teacher and SLT. Children on the SEN register play an active part in 'pupil voice' by articulating their views of school and life and how effective provision is for them. They are hugely wise, one child stating, 'We should have a group of children with disabilities getting together to support each other'.

Due to the systems of support built around the school SEND children achieve well. The Principal provides infectious and inspirational leadership to her team and school community. The systems, support and training for staff have created an unwavering focus on raising achievement levels and improving the quality of education for all children. The vision 'to inspire, challenge and nurture the individuality of the next generation' is explicitly understood by staff, pupils, parents, carers, and the wider community. Their motto of 'together we learn, together we grow, together we achieve', is central to the shared policies and practices of the school and has contributed significantly to the school's continuous and sustained improvement. It is not the systems and processes that makes Whaley Thorns, in the view of Governors and staff, it's the leadership. The Principals open, transparent, and visible leadership has built a team that expects high challenge but with low threat. There is a culture and climate that has been created where the team learns and develops together and support each other in the process. Both new teachers and new pupils openly discussed how they felt supported and able to grow in the school environment. Governors, Parents, and pupils strongly agreed that the school is well led and managed, stating, 'This is such a great school since the new Head started...the school has been transformed'.

The SENCO is highly effective, hardworking, inspirational, and highly valued throughout the whole school community. The communication and relationships that the SENCO has developed with all stakeholders is a key element to why children in her care are able to make progress and achieve. Her contribution, and that of other staff, has had a direct impact in supporting the well-being of children and their families, especially during the pandemic, with food parcels as well as delivering education. This input has created huge trust between parents, children, and the school, empowering children to make progress and attain, as highlighted in the case studies made with the Governors. The SENCO is developing relationships that have enable parents to challenge themselves in believing what their child can do, including supporting children with learning difficulties to develop skills that will support them in life and their transition through education.

All leaders are highly visible and accessible whilst ensuring that all children are successful. Through their interactions with children and staff, they communicate and model high expectations of behaviour. Behaviour incidents are rare, and children stated that 'Everyone is



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kind and supports each other.' Difference is accepted by all children and when challenges occur staff explicitly support children in their understanding of need and adaption required to meet that need. The leaders have a recognised the importance of transitions within school and actively praise children at every opportunity. There is a culture of continual self-reflection, development, and improvement by understanding that behaviour is a manifestation of unmet need. The school and Trust are tireless in working to meet this need, by having outside agencies support in the training and development of staff, children and parents including having a Paralympic athlete and ex- professional footballer to advocate the raising of aspiration and aid develop a growth mindset.

Planning and provision are continuously monitored, adapted, and changed to meet the needs of the children. Ongoing assessments scaffold children's learning pathways and are reactive to individual needs. There is a secure culture where staff are not afraid to change the direction of learning and reshape their lessons to ensure that every child can be successful.

There is a culture of continuous professional development and mentoring provided by the school and the Trust. Leaders provide support for developing teachers' subject and pedagogical content knowledge in order to enhance the teaching of the curriculum. There is well-planned, focussed and structured programme of continuous professional development, which is highly valued by staff. As a result, staff feel involved in their own professional development, creating a climate of challenge, support, and highly effective and innovative teaching.

It is clear leadership qualities from the Principal and SENCO, effectively supported by the Trust, have played a major role in creating such a reflective and continually developing and rapidly improving school.

I am of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark's Inclusive School Award. There are only minor areas requiring development and the school is aware of these. I recommend that the school be awarded IQM's Inclusive School Award and be reassessed in 3 years' time.

I also recommend that the school should consider applying for Centre of Excellence status subject to the inclusion within its plans of the appropriate areas for development and the completion of the Centre of Excellence documentation. If the school chooses to pursue this status and it were to be awarded, the school would be subject to annual review from this point forwards.

**Assessor:** Ian Lowe

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

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



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### Element 1 - The Inclusion Values and Practice of the School

#### Strengths

- Inclusion is central to the ethos of Whaley Thorns Community Primary School and Nursery.
- There is a focus on transition throughout the school and systems are in place to make each child and family feel part of the Whaley Thorns community.
- Targeted interventions are delivered to individual/groups of focus children in line with their targets and regularly monitored for impact by the SENCO, Governors and Trust.
- The SENCO and school staff are skilled at supporting the ever-changing needs of families and children. They offer extensive and highly skilled pastoral support to children who are unable to learn in the classroom environment. This is on a temporary basis within a session or day. This approach enables the children to keep up with their academic learning whilst allowing them time reflect and learn to self-regulate before returning to the classroom.
- The school has a high focus on high quality wave-1 teacher support to ensure SEND pupils are accessing whole class teaching alongside their peers, but also to ensure that the class teacher has ultimate ownership over the pupil's holistic journey and outcomes. In lessons observed the teachers and TAs all know the children well and are able to articulate the provision made for SEND children.
- Values are lived throughout the school by all staff. This is modelled by the Principal and SENCO constantly and consistently and all stakeholders are able to articulate and model behaviour as a result. The staff are confident in their understanding of what is expected and are an extremely tight and focused team. More than one member of staff has indicated that the support received within the school has enabled them to develop their skills and pedagogy, enabling them to grow and become more confident as an individual.
- Provision is in place to develop children's skills and celebrate their strengths. This is evidence by the highly effective nurture group and forest schools seen during the visit. Children have a clear understanding of what is expected from them and really appreciate the boundaries and enjoy the positive reward systems in place.
- The academy has a broad and well-planned assembly/workshop programme. This is enhanced by regular visitors from the wider community. The assemblies are planned in line with the kindness curriculum and values focusing particularly on aspiration. This includes working with Paralympians and local football clubs to develop an understanding of the wider opportunities available to them and how to grow a positive mindset.

#### Next Steps:

To ensure the new members of the school staff understand the depth of the values and ethos of the school and how these values are important to impact on holistic pupil growth and learning.



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### Element 2 - The Learning Environment, Resources and ICT

#### Strengths

- Leaders are inspirational. They drive an ambitious vision for the school providing increasingly high-quality education to all pupils that meets the needs of the children.
- Leaders are dedicated to ensuring an inclusive culture within the school, through their commitment to support and adapt the curriculum for all children.
- They have moved from a school with opportunities but barriers into one that is highly motivating and accessible, especially if you like trees inside and out! Their curriculum recognises pupil's prior learning and provides first hand and practical learning experiences. The school places high value on outdoor learning. This has had a visible impact with children displaying high interpersonal skills and a demonstrable improvement in language development. The children's behaviours and attitudes are being developed so that they can develop skills for life-long learning.
- The school vision is for all pupils to engage in a broad, rich, and purposeful curriculum. This is demonstrated by the actively used environment, for such things as forest schools and Footgolf! However, the curriculum extends to equine care, with children having opportunities to build confidence and self-esteem by having riding and horse care provision.
- Learners who require additional support are given extra or differentiated resources to support. For example, this includes the development of a sensory room and overlays or larger font or the use of ICT as a learning aid to support individual children.
- Collaborative and multi-disciplinary working is a strength across the school and within the Trust with their 'early help' support and in collaboration with local external agencies. Children are supported quickly and in turn anxieties are reduced and outcomes are increased.

#### Next Steps:

Further develop the library areas to encourage reading with pupils, raising aspiration, and involving the community.



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### Element 3 - Learner Attitudes, Values and Personal Development

- The children at Whaley Thorns are extremely welcoming, kind, and considerate. They move around the school with a smile and greet people with a kind word.
- The school leaders have a strong belief that securing skills will give all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, the knowledge, self-belief, and cultural capital that they need to be successful in life. The implementation of the outdoor curriculum and the introduction by the Trust of the 'kindness curriculum' will have a direct impact on their personal development but it will also in raising standards.
- Children want to achieve. The children at Whaley Thorns take pride in themselves and in their work. The children and parents enjoy class dojo and children are motivated to gain numerous reward certificates.
- Children have a voice within the school with the use of the School Council and pupil interviews and questionnaires to mention but a few. The school also provides lots of opportunities for children to take responsibility for and improve the quality of their school. These include Reading Ambassadors, Playtime Listeners and even Litter Pickers. All are proud of their roles and how they make a difference to the school environment.

#### Next Steps:

To embed the processes that are already provided for children and give more opportunities for all children to articulate their viewpoints and have a direct impact on their development.





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### Element 4 - Learner Progress and the Impact on Learning

- Children make progress from their original starting points and the disadvantage gap is closing. There are higher number of pupils on track to achieve 'expected' at end of year and the legacy of underachievement is diminishing over time. The school overall attainment at KS2 is due to fall due to the complex nature of a significant number of pupils in Year 6. The school has accurate details of the progress these children have made during their time within school.
- The progress and attainment of children with SEND is strong throughout the school. The tracking of this is rigorous and robust.
- Children are enthused and excited by the increasingly broad and balanced curriculum with children eager to share the knowledge that they have developed.
- TAs are deployed to support individual children and groups of children with their learning needs. They are increasingly highly skilled and a strength of the school in ensuring interventions are delivered effectively and have an impact on raising standards, particularly for the most vulnerable children.
- The EYFS environment and its provision is of high quality and meets the needs for the children in its care. The help that individual children are given within this environment supports their later development.
- The consistency of the KS1 and KS2 environments allow children to use these as teaching aids and support the schools approach in building resilience and independence in learning strategies. This includes them looking at their own previous learning, books/walls and then their buddy before asking the teacher.
- Additional resources are provided by the SENCO in line with their individual needs for any child who requires additional support. Strategies developed using key resources are consistently embedded.
- Whaley School has increasingly high expectations. This allows the children to know, understand and strive to achieve the highest achievement across the curriculum. The staff support children who actively strive to achieve this. There is consistent recognition for children who always make the right choices and are kind by celebrating their achievements. This directly encourages positive behaviour and attitudes, which are continually modelled and celebrated by all staff.

#### Next Steps:

Continue to run interventions throughout school to ensure children are targeted for social, emotional, and academic support and ensure that these are monitored and evaluated for impact.



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### Element 5 - Learning and Teaching (monitoring)

- Teachers and leaders use assessment well. Assessment of children's progress is regular and accurate. Teachers regularly moderate assessment both within the academy and with peers within the academy group.
- The school ensures quality time is built into the school week to create space for teachers to carry out assessment tasks in a way that is meaningful, effective and does not create a burden. Well-being for both children and staff are extremely high on the Principals agenda.
- The consistent approach to classroom environments enables children to take support from the displays.
- Teachers check pupils' understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear, direct feedback.
- Teacher's marking and feedback has an immediate and meaningful impact on pupils' learning. Children respond well to their identified areas for improvement and are proud of their achievements.
- Lessons are matched to children's ability; personalised targets are set, and the children's own needs are acknowledged.
- Group work, paired work, and Kagen techniques are used to support learning and communicated with parents and stakeholders.

#### Next Steps:

Research tracking systems to efficiently and effectively track the small steps progress that SEND children acquire and utilise this in individual case studies.



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### Element 6 - Parents, Carers and Guardians

- The academy has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. These are communicated and applied consistently and fairly by all staff across the academy and children respond positively to the rules and are keen to be seen behaving well.
- Children understand these expectations and as a result, their behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning and progress over time. Children are keen to learn, listen well and follow instructions given by adults.
- Children say they feel very safe in the academy and know how to keep themselves safe. They are confident that if problems arise, they know that staff will help and support them.
- Leaders, at all levels, are visible throughout the school day and interact positively with children across the academy. They are directly on hand to support all staff in managing pupil behaviour.
- Behaviour is exemplary: it is calm, polite, and friendly throughout the academy, during lessons, during changeovers and during break and lunchtimes. These transition times are recognised and managed by the school to support all children.
- Children love the school, evidenced by children talking about how much they love the academy and the staff that support them.
- The relationships among pupils and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture. They actively support each other and take joy in supporting others. 'I enjoy helping out with the younger children...it's the kind thing to do.'
- Children clearly demonstrate the skill of working collaboratively. They are mature in their outlook, on how supporting others not only makes them feel good about themselves, but also supports and aids them in improving their work.
- The SENCO provides highly effective support for these children through targeted social and emotional intervention, with impact being regularly reviewed. There are several case studies which evidence the positive impact of this work over time. This work is effectively supported by the Trust.
- Children consistently talked about in ways that appreciate and respect differences. They celebrate the things that we share across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities. This was clearly demonstrated in displays and conversations with children and staff.
- The academy uses restorative practice approach used to feel part of a supportive community, respecting one another and being accountable for their actions. This approach is used to promote an open and honest environment where children feel comfortable and safe to discuss any issues that may have arisen. As a result, children are patient, tolerant and



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understanding of all. The children are very protective and supportive of those who are most vulnerable, which is a joy to witness in the playground and the walking mile.

- Parents hold the academy in high regard, recognising the journey to improve the life chances of all children within the school.
- Leaders also work effectively with community partners such as sports personalities, the local authority, local charities, and education programmes. Such effective partnerships have started to contribute to the increasingly high aspirations of pupils and parents.
- Whaley Thorns has a highly visible and approachable Principal. She has strengthened the relationship between school and parents with a genuine inclusive open-door policy for all. This is recognised and appreciated by parents and staff alike.
- Parents believe communication is excellent and that the Principal is key to their children succeeding at the academy. Parents and carers see the academy as a collaborative partner they hugely respect and are grateful for.
- All parents are greeted by a member of the team at the beginning and of the school day which supports communication and allows parents a voice when children or the families are struggling. The relationships built by the staff are having an impact with pupils. There is a genuine feeling that the school is there for them and their children.
- Leaders signpost and support parents with a range of services including Early Help (provided by the Trust), counselling, finance, and transition to name but a few.

### Next Steps:

To develop the workshop/open day events and use them upskill parents. The objective being to develop a deep understanding of teaching and learning and increase aspiration. But also, to embed a positive mind set and build resilience together to support the children's life chances outside of the local area.



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### Element 7 - Governing Body and Management: - External Accountability/Support

- The Governing Body of Whaley Thorns Primary School have played, and continue to play, a strong role in driving the school forward.
- Team Education Trust have had a direct impact on Whaley Thorns in areas such as leadership, SENCO and providing Early Help provision. The Trust and the board have rigorous procedures in place to ensure that the school continues to move forward, whilst maintaining its individuality and culture. This is evidenced by the Trust SENCO and School Improvement Leads input into provision.
- Whaley Thorns is working well with other academies within the Trust, and this will improve as pandemic restrictions lift. This includes moderation and learning walks.
- Governors have specific roles and are undertaking work that directly supports and challenges the school. They have undertaken reviews related to their area and reviewed provision. This has led to governors completing case studies related to children to understand the impact of the school's actions. They are increasingly knowledgeable about the school and what it needs to do to improve even further.

#### Next Steps:

Embed and monitor the systems and processes that are having an impact on pupils and review succession planning within the governing body.



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### Element 8 - The School in the Community

- At Whaley Thorns, parents and families are welcomed and valued and staff work together to create a whole school community that is inclusive of all. This is tangible throughout the school and backed up by the parents and governors. Parents enjoy participating at events within the school. For example, the mile run on a Thursday where parents are invited to join their children. This creates a real sense of belonging and achievement.
- The partnerships they have created have contributed to the school providing an extended and rich educational experience the children. This is evidenced by the horse riding, Bolsover Sports Partnership and working with Rhubarb Farm.
- Whaley Thorns works in the community, delivering food parcels during the pandemic but also working closely with the local nursing home. Children even sent cards and letters to keep in touch during the time that they were not able to physically visit.
- There is a system of retrieving feedback from all stakeholders through questionnaires which the school uses effectively to amend the provision they provide to the children. Just as importantly it cements the school at the heart of the village.