



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



Overview

As the School Council said, "Dhoon School is small but amazing." The school certainly does pack a rich and broad experience into their 3 mixed year-group classes, with a determination to do their best for every 1 of their 79 pupils. The love and attention provided to each child is striking, and adults are committed to celebrating everyone's individuality throughout every aspect of school life. As a parent said, "all children feel seen and included." This is apparent when walking through the school: the walls are a celebration of everyone's work, with artwork and writing displayed through corridors and classrooms.

The corridors showcase work produced during the Dhoon-themed weeks which support a sense of belonging by focusing on local history, legend, and geography. The Head of School explained that it is important to the ethos of the school that every child can see their work celebrated on the walls of the school. Children's individual achievements are also celebrated through weekly assemblies, which include lots of participation by children and are enjoyed by all. Children here are also afforded an impressive range of opportunities to participate in activities outside school.

A lovely feature of the school is the opportunities for older and younger children to mix, forming friendships and supportive relationships. This is very much appreciated by parents who say that older children nurture the younger ones, to the benefit of both. Teachers encourage the children to see themselves as a school community, all contributing to shared success. The special themed days twice a year offer a chance for the children to take part in activities in mixed-age groups.

Leaders recently reviewed the playground arrangements, consulting with staff and children about whether they wanted to change from 1 shared playground for all children across the school, to separate playgrounds for older and younger children. The feedback was unanimous that they should keep 1 shared playground so that all the children can benefit from being and seeing role models, mentors, and friends.

When asked to sum up the school, parents said, "it's warm, friendly, and welcoming. It gives children so much confidence; they're asked to participate all the time and their opinion matters." This was certainly evidenced during the assessment day. There are so many opportunities for children to share their opinion and know that it is valued.

During my visit, I met with the School Council, an inclusive group of children from Year 2 to Year 6. Children apply each year to sit on the school council, either in a committee role (Chair, Secretary or Treasurer) or as a class representative. The Council is facilitated by the wonderfully dedicated School Administrator, and their work is integral to the school.

They organise charity fundraising days, school extra-curricular events, a games club, and competitions. During their work, they adhere to the inclusive principles of the school by involving everyone in all they do. For instance, even the choice of school Christmas tree was put to an open vote with pictures of the 3 contenders published and an election being held before the winner was bought!



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Pupil voice opportunities run through every aspect of Dhoon School, empowering all the children. A parent I spoke to shared that her child was naturally quiet but has been given just as many opportunities to share her opinions as other more vocal children. As a result, she said, her child feels confident to move to secondary school, knowing that being quiet doesn't mean your opinion is overlooked. She said, "the school staff accept who a child is and let them flourish."

While I was observing a Forest School session, a group of Year 6 were discussing running a club for younger children so they could share the craft activity they were enjoying. This autonomy to be leaders, and eagerness to share activities with younger children in school, is clearly an embedded aspect of the school.

When asked what was special about Dhoon School, the School Council were eager to share their pride in the Dhoon Values – Happy, Kind, Ambitious, Inclusive and Honest - and High 5 (learning dispositions) – Creativity, Curiosity, Independence, Determination and Collaboration. The Head of School had described them as the "bedrock of every day here" and this was demonstrated by the children. Even the youngest could recall the Values and High 5 and tell me how they are used throughout school: in class, at playtimes and in assemblies.

Nevertheless, school leaders are keen to revisit and refresh them, in collaboration with new teachers who have joined the school since the Values and High 5 were first developed. In this way, they can ensure that the core ethos of the school is still relevant and that today's pupils and staff have ownership of what is central to Dhoon School's strong identity.

Also central to Dhoon School's identity is its position at the heart of the local community. The relationship is valued by the school, families, and community alike, and productive links provide broad opportunities to children as well as strengthen their sense of belonging. Members of the community are warmly welcomed into school and their contributions, including Stitching Club, Forest School and Tag Rugby, are very much valued. "Relationships are everything," is how the Head of School described the school's success.

Local links include joint events organised with the Maughold Social Club, regular assemblies at the church, themed days supported by members of the local community, and events for the schoolchildren put on by local commissioners. Children also learn that their place in the local community comes with responsibility, and it was lovely to hear the School Council talk about the charities that they have researched and supported through whole-school fundraising.

School leaders and staff also work hard to develop and maintain strong partnerships with parents, carers, and families. As explained by the Head of School, "it's important that they feel this is their school as well." The feedback from parents was incredibly positive and appreciative: they certainly do feel included in the life and work of the school. They reported that teachers are always available at the beginning and end of every day and that every child is greeted by name by every member of staff, including the Executive Head.



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Families value the open-door policy and the many invitations into school to share in the work the children have been doing. They also commented on the excellent communication from the school and described the staff as “very responsive.” Teachers also valued the school ethos of including families, observing that there is a high degree of trust between staff and families. The school’s investment in the whole-school community means they benefit from a reliable ‘Family Task Team’ who undertakes regular duties as well as well as responding to ad hoc ‘calls to action.’ Members of the Family Task Team help to teach swimming on a weekly basis, support in school by listening to children reading, and contribute to the improvement of premises and resources.

Everyone I spoke to at Dhoon School has a wonderful sense of belonging. Pride in the school extends to families, the local community, school cooks, established staff and new staff, as well as the children who spoke passionately about their school: “no-one is left out; everyone has a place and a role. Teamwork is 1 of the specialities of our school.” It was a pleasure to visit and share that same sense of belonging, even just for a short time.

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: Ms Roanne Clements

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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