



## Annual Evaluation for the IQM Flagship Project



**School:** Red Gates School,  
Farnborough Avenue,  
South Croydon, CR2 8HD

**Head/Principal:** Lorraine Slee

**IQM Lead:** Melissa Hendry

**Date of Review:** 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021

**Assessor:** Emma Skipper

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

**Cluster Group:** Cosmos Learning Hub

**Ambassador:** Adriana Verrecchia

**Date of Next Meeting:** 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**Next Cluster Group Meeting Focus:** TBC

### **Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day:**

#### **Discussions with:**

- Headteacher and Deputy Head Teacher.
- Parent.
- Pupils who conducted school tour.
- Classroom Teachers and Teaching Assistants during Learning Walk.
- Outreach Practice Lead.
- Assistant Head re Widgit Go.



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### Evaluation of Annual Progress towards the Flagship Project

The title of Red Gates Schools' Flagship Project is:

*'To review and develop therapy input across all pathways and monitor impact on Red Gates curriculum and pupil progress.'*

Due to the disruption of partial closures and children continuing to be in bubbles during part of the 2020-2021 academic year, it became difficult to implement the original intended Flagship project. The Deputy Headteacher/IQM Lead led a review of all therapy across the school and had revised a training plan for staff training to start in Spring 2021. Meetings with service leads in December 2021 to discuss therapy allocation however, revealed that NHS therapists had been directed not to attend Red Gates in person and once allowed in they were not permitted to cross bubbles, thus limiting the number of children that could be supported. In light of these challenges the IQM Lead at Red Gates made the decision to adapt their project and implement a new project with the title *'To develop the use of Widgit Go to support speech and communication needs.'*

When reflecting on the NHS therapist provision at Red Gates, Senior Leaders recognised a gap in speech and language support across the school. It was identified that the biggest trigger for negative behaviour incidents was frustration from communication difficulties. The use of a digital platform to support functional communication had previously been rejected by Senior Leadership and was an approach that teaching staff were hesitant to embrace. Anxiety around children spending increasing amounts of time in front of screens was the catalyst for their initial concern but with some reluctance staff agreed to trial the app Widgit Go. Widgit Go is an app that supports functional communication that can be installed onto iPads. Having assessed which pupils the app would be suitable for, children were given their own iPad with the app installed on it. All access to any other apps had been blocked. The iPad stays with the child throughout their learning journey at Red Gates and will go on with them when they leave for their secondary provision. The use of the app has been written into the child's EHCP to ensure continuity of access to the programme.

The families of children using the app have been given training on the purpose and value of the app, as well as how to support their child using it to communicate both at home and at school. Staff members have been trained on how to create the pictorial communication grids, which create the basis of the communication tool. The grids can support the children in a range of areas including choosing snacks, rooms around school, choosing activities etc. Once the grids are created staff are encouraged to save them in a central base that can be shared with all staff. Images are selected from 'Communication in Print,' a resource that children are familiar with as the images are used in the range of visuals displayed throughout the school. Additionally, the app allows the option to upload photographs, meaning grids of family and friends can be created. The app has proved successful in allowing pupils and staff to explore emotions and support pupils in engaging with their peers at playtimes. For a child who has been diagnosed with diabetes, the app has been useful in enabling him to alert staff if he is feeling unwell. Widgit Go has been significant in providing pupil voice during EHCP



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review meetings; allowing pupils to state what they enjoy and dislike about school and what they feel they are good at and what they would like to do better at.

Despite the interruptions to the project caused by Covid 19, and Red Gates having to change the focus of their project, the evaluation of the Flagship Project for 2019-2020 has been successfully achieved. The School Leadership Team strategically evaluated the difficulties in delivering their initial project and focused on the highlighted barriers for some children's ability to communicate. They have subsequently taken steps to ensure that, that barrier is being addressed. SLT have worked hard to gain staff trust and enthusiasm for the approach and are aware of the areas they still wish to develop.

### **Agreed Actions for the Next Steps in the Flagship Project:**

Red Gates staff are working hard to continue to develop the next phase of the Flagship Project. The next steps for 2020-2021 have been identified and shared with all stakeholders. The title of their new flagship project is:

*"To reinstate good practice across the school following the lifting of Covid restrictions to re-establish working relationships with the local community and projects and carers."*

**Widgit Go:** Staff at Red Gates are confident that the use of Widgit Go has had a positive impact on those children who have been introduced to the app. Staff have seen improvements in sentence structure and social skills as well as an increase in the number of children able to share how they are feeling and beginning to identify why they may be feeling that way. The School Behaviour Team have also started to use the app so that they can support a child who may be struggling to explain any frustrations. The grids on their apps include several motivators and strategies to support the child. Children across all pathways of the school, apart from EYFS, have been assessed for suitability to use the app. Staff are liaising closely with the parents of those children to ensure they are able to access and use Widgit Go at home. The purchase of future iPads to support new pupils has been written into the school budget to ensure continuity of the programme.

### Next Steps as Discussed during the Flagship Review

- Outreach to secondary schools to ensure that teachers have a good understanding of how the app works and to support the continuity of use of Widgit Go in a new setting.
- Investigate additional options that the app offers such as choosing voices that represent the ethnicity of the child.
- Develop staff confidence in the app and continue to use it across the curriculum e.g., linking the app to texts being used in class.

**Re-establishing relationships with parents and families:** Covid-19 had an enormous impact on Red Gates' ability to meet with the parents of their school. During lockdown good communication was maintained between home and school but staff are



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keen to reinstate pre Covid activities such as parent workshops and supporting siblings. Red Gates School staff acknowledge that for the siblings of their pupil's, life can have some challenges. They recognise the importance of enabling siblings to understand what school is like at Red Gates and introducing them to other children in a similar position to themselves. To support siblings an open afternoon is held where the children attend a session led by a Red Gates TA to talk about different needs. They then spend some time with their sibling in their classroom joining in with an activity with them. This valuable opportunity had to be put on hold during Covid-19.

### Next Steps as Discussed during the Flagship Review

- Re-establish face to face workshops based on parental feedback from annual reviews.
- Create a video to showcase good practice at Red Gates School for prospective parents.
- Re-instate face to face events such as sibling afternoon and Christmas performance.

**Inclusion:** SLT recognise the importance of looking beyond their school and encouraging inclusion and collaboration with other schools. Each class at Red Gates is linked to a class at Gilbert Scott Primary School, with whom they share their school site. The aim is for the classes to join each other for a weekly session. Children from Red Gates' sensory pathway have links with Courtwood School and join them in their Forest School activity. SLT also recognise the importance of their pupils being confident when out in the local community, with this in mind each class has a weekly timetabled community visit. This may include a visit to local shops, a café, or a walk along a familiar route, developing pupils' life-skills.

### Next Steps as Discussed during the Flagship Review

- Re-establish links with the Brit School to undertake joint art project.
- Re-build inclusion opportunities with local mainstream primary schools, allowing pupils to be offered wider opportunities and staff to share expertise and knowledge.
- In person outreach support for mainstream schools.
- Red Gates staff to continue to be part of the 'Specialist Learning Partnership' across South London to support staff in moderation. Staff from across the schools' four pathways to join moderation events.

Investigate different ways of putting collaboration with Gilbert Scott in place - due to difficulties with their staffing

### **The Impact of the Cluster Group**



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Red Gates are active participants of the Cosmos Learning Hub Cluster Group. They have taken part in three cluster meetings over the course of the last year.

Impact of cluster meetings:

- Support regarding how to cope with Covid.
- Opportunity to reflect on practice and staff wellbeing during the pandemic.
- Parent engagement and monitoring of the impact and use of home school communication books.

### Overview

From the moment children arrive in the morning at Red Gates, normally via bus or taxi, they are greeted warmly and positively by all staff. Children are welcomed to school personally with staff using their names and signing Makaton to ensure understanding. Pupils are encouraged to engage and respond to staff and are shown empathy and understanding if they are reluctant to leave their mode of transport and enter school. The morning routine is well established and runs smoothly, allowing familiarity and predictability for the children. Staff understand the needs of their pupils well and allow time for free choice and sensory circuits on their arrival to class; being aware of the long journey and time spent travelling for some children.

On the day of my visit two children conducted a tour of the school, one using the Widgit Go app to support their communication with me. The child was able to use the app to make choices as to which parts of the school we should visit. He was proficient at using the app and it allowed communication with a stranger – something that may have proved incredibly difficult to him without it. The tour enabled me to visit a range of classes across the four pathways of the school: EYFS, ASD, Sensory and Learning and Independence and Social Skills (LISS). The set up and environment of each class has been considered carefully and reflects the pathway intent for the pupils e.g., ASD classrooms have limited displays to avoid distraction and sensory overload, they also have the use of individual workstations. All classrooms used visual prompts to support pupils in understanding their day and to aid them in making choices. Staff to pupil ratios are high to ensure children receive the correct provision and can access a wide range of activities.

During the tour I observed a music therapy lesson for a class of non-verbal pupils. Led by the therapist, children participated in playing patterns on claves – this was clearly an activity that the children enjoyed. Sensory painting using herbs mixed into paint, an experiment using deflating balloons to move objects, parachute play in the sensory room and children having fun in the soft play classroom were other activities that children were engaged in. During all the above activities and throughout the course of my visit, staff demonstrated high levels of empathy and positive engagement towards their pupils. At playtime children had access to a range of bikes and tricycles – one child enjoyed driving his Teaching Assistant around the playground on the back of his trike. Great care and patience were demonstrated by staff when supporting children who were upset and anxious or reluctant to join an activity. Staff sang soothing songs



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to pupils and created games to encourage their involvement. Staff focused on the child's interests and moved at the child's pace.

During my visit, a team from 'See Ability' were in school undertaking eye tests for pupils. Attending an optician is something that could be very stressful and challenging for some pupils, so Red Gates facilitates the tests happening in school where familiar adults are able to support the child throughout the test. Red Gates also facilitates dental checks and hearing tests taking place on the school site. This service is so important as its facilitation has led to several children being given glasses, whose vision needs would otherwise have potentially gone undetected.

The Outreach Lead spoke passionately about her commitment to supporting mainstream schools in understanding how best to support pupils with additional needs. Support is given through an initial telephone consultation, followed by an in-school observation. Once the observation is completed a report is created with suggested strategies and ideas of support. Red Gates then offers 'in reach' support, where mainstream staff are invited in to observe how staff respond to a child whose needs reflect that of the child's observed in mainstream. Red Gates' staff return to the mainstream setting to review the strategies being used and offer further feedback and guidance. Mainstream schools can also sign up to workshops and bespoke training for individual schools. These can include virtual workshops, twilight staff training or individual staff training sessions. The Outreach Scheme has proved so successful that the Outreach Lead is having to limit the number of support cases that it takes on each term to ensure high quality provision, they have also seen schools come back for repeat advice.

Transition to secondary school for Red Gates' pupils is something that is given considerable thought and planning. During Year 4 and Year 5 staff invite parents into school to meet with themselves and representatives from secondary school. During the Year 5 EHCP review meeting transition is discussed. If necessary, parents are supported in completing their applications. Once a school has been decided, secondary school staff visit pupils in their primary setting. Once places have been allocated pupils visit their secondary school once a half term – these visits include a tour of the school, a chance to meet their Year 7 teacher and an opportunity to stay and have lunch. Pupils are also given the opportunity to see the new uniform and try it on. Multi-disciplinary meetings, which include medical staff, school staff, parents and staff of the child's new school are held to ensure an in-depth hand over is given. Social stories and transition books are created to support all children through transition – not just those moving to a new setting. Photos of the school, classrooms, staff, and other significant areas in the school are included.

A parent that I met with during the review day spoke of the high level of support and positive communication that Red Gates offers its parents. The home communication book is considered a valuable resource, particularly as children may not always be able to communicate effectively with their parents about their day and most children arrive by transport so there is not the opportunity for incidental talks with staff at drop off and pick up. The book is updated daily and may include information about what the child has eaten or a new task they have tried; parents can write in the book too. The use of 'Solar' an online assessment tool is another way that school keeps parents



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informed of their child's progress. The parent I spoke with explained the importance of being able to see photographs of their child meeting their targets and how she really valued the use of the tool. She further explained how staff made themselves readily available through class email addresses and via telephone if needed. Workshops on Makaton, Speech and Language and support from dieticians had all been accessed by this parent. Parents are also given the opportunity to visit classes, attend EHCP review meetings and watch school productions. When asked to sum up the school in her own words, she stated, "I love this school. My son has made so much progress since he started. The staff are so understanding, and I am so thankful for the support they give us."

It was an absolute privilege to visit Red Gates and to see all the good work that staff are engaged in. Thank you for preparing the review day so well and taking the time to share your Flagship Project.

**Assessor: Emma Skipper**

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. McCann'.

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