



Report on IQM Inclusive School Award



School Name: Don Valley Academy, Jossey Lane, Scawthorpe, Doncaster. DN5 9DD

Headteacher: Hannah Thornton

IQM Lead: Janet Hood/Julia Nicholls

Assessment Dates: Day 1: 18th May 2020 (virtual)
Day 2: 15th Jan 2021 (virtual)

Assessor: Kelsey Clark-Davies

Sources of Evidence:

- Self- Evaluation Report.
- Website.
- Ofsted report (2019).
- Twitter.
- Performance Tables.

Virtual Meetings:

- Principal.
- Vice Principal for Deep Support.
- Assistant Principal/SENCo.
- 2 Inclusion Leads.
- 2 Teachers.
- 2 pupils from the student council.
- Learning Manager.
- SEN HLTA.
- Attendance Manager.
- Attendance Officer.
- Chair of Governors.
- Parent calls.



Summary

Don Valley Academy is a larger than average secondary school in Doncaster with 1014 pupils on roll. The school community is 87% White British with a small percentage of pupils with other mixed heritage. The majority of students live in areas containing significant pockets of deprivation, characterised by high unemployment and low average incomes. 35% of Don Valley's intake is in the bottom 10% of deprivation nationally and 44% are entitled to FSM. Students' prior attainment is below that of the national average in all year groups and 10.7% of pupils have SEND. Over the last three years, numbers in year groups have steadily increased and confidence in the school has significantly improved over recent years within the local area so it is now oversubscribed.

Don Valley Academy is part of Delta Academies Trust, a large multi academy trust with 51 primary, secondary and AP academies across the North of England. Don Valley Academy is well supported by the Trust, which provides effective challenge and support to the Academy. This is coordinated by the Director of Education, who is supported by a number of subject directors in key areas – English, Maths, Science, Humanities, MFL, Data and Inclusion.

The academy has been on a significant journey over the last three years, showing sustained and rapid improvement. It achieved a "Good" OFSTED judgement in 2019. Delta's vision statement is about "Changing lives" and at Don Valley this has been extended to "Changing lives through belief and collaboration". The drive, passion and inspirational leadership of the Principal, and the previous Principal (who has now moved to another Delta Academy but with whom Don Valley collaborate closely) together with a highly skilled and committed senior leadership team and governing body have been instrumental in bringing about this change. Staff talk about how everything which is done is carried out with kindness and they describe the leadership modelled by the Principal as "honest and transparent, with endless belief".

The principal explains that much of this change has been brought about by simplifying things and just ensuring that "the basics are done well". Behaviour has "transformed" over this time. Three years ago the school was in the top 10% of schools nationally for exclusions and behaviour was described as "unsafe and inadequate". Since then exclusion rates have reduced dramatically. OFSTED (2019) reported that:

"The behaviour of pupils has improved markedly. Teachers use systems to manage pupils' behaviour consistently."

At Don Valley boundaries are now explicit and rigorously applied. Staff and students alike are clear about expectations and also about consequences of actions. The leadership team talk about how they now do not adapt the rules for anyone, however, they will do whatever they can to support students with the rules and a number of examples were given where the academy had gone above and beyond to support young people and their families. Recently the academy has developed its Trauma Informed approach with whole school CPD in Adverse Childhood Experiences. This has led to teachers having greater awareness and empathy for students' needs, with also clear



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plans in place on how to support and regulate students when behaviour escalates. The leadership team has further extended the work on ACEs to look at the quality of relationships throughout the school – between staff, students, indeed the whole community. This relational approach, coupled with explicit and firm boundaries, is undoubtedly what has led to much of the transformation in school.

The academy's response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been exemplary. Throughout all lockdowns at least fortnightly telephone contact has been made with all students, for some this is more regular, weekly or even daily in some cases. The remote learning offer was rapidly developed and now all remote learning is live lessons, for all year groups, with over 90% engagement. This also includes assemblies, where students are encouraged to participate, building confidence to engage e.g. recently, students all shared photographs of their snowmen. The Principal explains that, whilst Covid has caused an incredibly difficult time for everyone, one of the positives which has risen from it is the communication with students and families. Connectivity, within the whole school community is incredibly strong currently.

Leaders have found that, unfortunately, the impact of Covid has had a negative impact on the mental health of some students and they are therefore adapting provision to ensure that robust support remains in place.

Leaders also talk about how, since the academy converted to Delta, the quality of teaching and learning has improved. The principal explains that historically teaching just wasn't good enough and how much investment in staff CPD and applying consistent systems has had impact. Teachers outline how consistent systems around teaching and learning are used in all lessons across the academy. For example, the term "Demonstrate and connect" is used by everyone to describe how connections are made with prior and future learning and how students must demonstrate their learning through written work or performance. Also, the concept of "collaborative learning" is applied consistently across the school where classrooms are set up for carefully selected group work to support learning.

OFSTED (2019) reported that:

"Teaching is consistently good. Leaders have developed a structure to lessons that is consistently applied. Teachers use pupil progress information well in their planning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and question pupils effectively."

Teaching and Learning is a significant strength in the academy with consistent non-negotiable strategies implemented in all classrooms with differentiation, collaborative learning strategies and recall techniques. The Assessment and Feedback strategy is having impact; the "Demonstrate and Connect" policy allows students to respond and improve immediately and has reduced teachers' workload. Consequently, outcomes are improving. The Y11 progress 8 figure is rapidly improving from -0.32 (2018) to +0.01 (2020).

It became clear throughout the IQM Review that staff are extremely passionate and dedicated about the academy, and indeed, the vision of "changing lives" shone through with everyone encountered. Their sense of drive and determination to improve the



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outcomes of all pupils came through strongly. The implementation of rigorous structures and processes supports the different teams to work strategically and collaboratively together. Strong teamwork amongst the staff is at the core of their relationships.

The Academy Advisory Board works closely with school leaders ensuring they offer robust challenge and support. They bring expertise in Education and Finance as well as strong connections to the local community. The highly committed Chair of Governors describes how reports are received by the AAB prior to meetings and that governors carefully scrutinise these and prepare questions to confirm what is reported. Governors also carry out both planned and unannounced visits (in normal circumstances) ensuring a strong presence across the academy.

A number of parents were spoken to during the assessment and their feedback was incredibly positive. Some of the strengths of the academy noted by parents were:

- Support from the SENDCO and pastoral staff. Going “above and beyond”, “I felt really listened to” and staff were “open to my suggestions”.
- Ensuring pupils have access to safe spaces, people and resources to support them.
- Highly inclusive in diversity. “When my child came out as gay, they just felt totally understood. The response and support from the school was amazing.”

The academy offers an extremely wide range of bespoke provision within school to include vulnerable learners. There is a real solution focussed approach from leaders, so that if a student needs something more than what is available, the academy will develop provision to include that pupil. This school has inclusion at its heart.

This provision includes:

- “The PLC” (Personalised Learning Centre) where students who may be presenting with challenging behaviour, experiencing exclusion or have attendance concerns can attend on a full or part time basis to complete set work in a small, contained, nurturing environment with skilled and experienced staff offering mentoring. This often replaces fixed term exclusion, ensuring students receive a clear message about unacceptable behaviour, whilst still remaining in school for reflection and support.
- “The Bridge” which offers full or part time placements for vulnerable students who may be experiencing anxiety, be school refusers or have medical /home issues in a small, nurturing environment. Skilled staff offer an alternative curriculum which addresses the SEMH needs of the cohort.
- “The Base” which offers intervention and catch-up programmes for students with SEND. This environment is carefully planned to support students’ needs and includes a soft area with natural lighting and an exercise bike to help students who need to regulate. Intervention includes, Lego therapy, Art based therapy and Dyslexia programmes.



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- “Diamonds” a KS3 Nurture Group setting which supports students to transition into Y7 and is particularly targeted on students with below average Literacy and/or SEMH needs on entry to the school.
- Targeted reading intervention. This includes Accelerated Reader, Reciprocal Reading approach across school and small reading groups (which continue remotely over Teams). In addition to this all Y7s now have dyslexia screening so that needs are identified early and support can be given.
- Nurture tutor groups – vertical mentoring groups with mixed ages during form time whereby students offer support to one another.
- Targeted support for pupils with ASC. This includes 1-1/groups sessions with a specialist HLTA, an adapted timetable, use of visuals and access to a specialist sensory room.
- Counselling sessions are available for students from an external provider – “With me in mind”.

In addition, when all other options have been exhausted, the school uses St. Wilfrids – a Delta Alternative Provision setting to offer an alternative to the school curriculum and, on rare occasions, other settings arranged through Doncaster Inclusion panel. The academy ensures it offers a safeguarding visit for any pupils attending off site AP on, at least, a 6 weekly basis and in addition to this, these pupils are discussed on a weekly basis in school.

The SENDCo sits on the LA panel and the academy works creatively with the LA to create preventative packages for students at risk of PEx. This can include for example blended packages with St Wilfrids AP, or also other external APs such as Jasper (medical provision), Changing lives or through bespoke support in school e.g. tutors/online learning.

All students with SEND have a “one page profile” describing them, their needs and strategies/resources used to support them, and this is shared with all staff. Additionally, students have chronologies which are shared with relevant staff, as is the detailed Inclusion register.

Students who have English as an additional language are well supported by the academy, using strong links with the LA EMTAS service. Buddy systems are used in school and students have opportunities to sit GCSEs in their home language. The academy uses visits from inspirational speakers such as those with refugee or traveller backgrounds to support students in increasing their awareness of different backgrounds and cultures and diversity and British Values are also fully addressed within the Life lessons curriculum. In addition, the whole school curriculum has recently been audited to ensure there is much diversity with regards to both race and sexuality.



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I had the opportunity to meet with members of the student council during the assessment who spoke with real pride about their school. Some of the comments made include:

- There is no bullying at all. If there are any issues, the school spots things early and resolves things.
- Teachers are very fair. They give warnings / chances. They are strict but we need them to be!
- Teachers know us well.
- We are always given a fresh start.
- There is lots of extra support for students with SEN e.g. The Base where you can go to calm down, and some students have extra teachers in lessons with them to stop feeling overwhelmed.
- There is also support for students with EAL.
- Students have a voice here- the student council is great.
- We have loads of clubs.
- The school gives the best opportunities for all children.
- The school helps families as well as the students. They have really helped my Mum.
- There's lots of support around mental health e.g. LGBTQ group and Mental health group after school and The Bridge.

Another real strength of the school is its opportunities offered for enrichment. A wide range of opportunities are offered, including Trampolining, Performing Arts, Football, Rugby, Piano, Art & Photography, Cheerleading, Science, Fortnite, Coding, Cooking and Table Tennis. In addition, the school offers a free daily Breakfast club, regular after school "Homework Club" opportunities, where students can access the IT suite and support groups such as "Mental Health Group" and "Don Valley Pride". Some clubs are free and specifically targeted at vulnerable learners. Staff describe the opportunities which arise from enrichment activities as incredibly valuable, including deepening relationships, social interaction and strengthening leadership skills. Activities offered are very much shaped through pupil voice, and if a club is not currently running which a number of students request, staff will make it happen.

Leaders have a clear philosophy about the importance of relationships throughout the academy and are further developing the Trauma Informed approach across school, working alongside an external ACE's specialist, Paul Carlisle. This includes whole school training in ACES, more finely tuned CPD for 30 specialist staff and bespoke consultancy with SLT focussing on relationships within school. This approach is ensuring all adults model respectful and restorative relational practice across the academy. In addition to this Don Valley has recently forged links with "Fortis", an external organisation offering individual and group therapeutic support in schools. Fortis will also offer reflective practice sessions with staff, enabling therapeutic thinking.

Safeguarding procedures are effective with rigorous and compulsory online training in place for all staff and robust safeguarding policies. The Academy uses an effective and secure online reporting system (CPOMS) monitored daily by safeguarding team. Regular safeguarding network meetings take place for all level 3 trained staff.



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The academy's links with the local community have significantly strengthened over recent years. Just prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the community was severely affected by flooding and during this time Don Valley became the central point of support for families in the area. The school was closed and became a refuge, working very closely with Tesco's to provide food, clothing and emergency aid to families. During the Covid-19 pandemic the school has also supported vulnerable families with weekly food hampers and over 350 laptops have been loaned to students, ensuring that now 100% of students have access to online learning. Leaders report that the community's belief and confidence in the school is really growing, and with that relationships are strengthening, and communication is softening. The community is realising that Don Valley cares.

In summary, it was a privilege to spend time with such a passionate and committed staff team. The students, parents and indeed the whole community at Don Valley are incredibly lucky to have such a committed, hardworking and passionate staff team who truly go above and beyond for all within their care. Leaders at this academy are relentless in ensuring every student at Don Valley is nurtured and supported to reach their full potential, proactively seeking creative solutions to even the most challenging situations.

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, many already identified within their own self-evaluation. Any suggestions for development are offered in an advisory capacity. 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.

Recommendation for Centre of Excellence: Yes

Assessor: Kelsey Clark-Davies

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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



Element One - The Inclusion Values of the School

- Inclusion is clearly at the absolute heart of this school and the deep care and affection for students is evident from Leaders and Staff at all levels. Staff talk about going above and beyond and this is evident in the feedback given from students.
- The layers of provision for students with SEND and vulnerable learners is vast. There is a relentlessness about staff to ensure that every student at Don Valley is included, and if a students' needs exceed what is on offer, the school will do whatever they can to develop provision to meet that need.
- Leaders are responsive to students' wishes and feelings, e.g. enrichment activities are developed according to student voice, and students report that staff are approachable.
- The school has a number of "Pledges" for its students to experience by the time they leave the academy, ensuring that all students, irrespective of starting points have access to a wide range of experiences and opportunities to enhance their learning. An example of these is in Y7 where the academy pays for every pupil to attend a residential trip and a recent trip to a premiership football match. The academy also pays for a full uniform, for every student entering Y7 and will provide uniform, on an ongoing basis, for those whose families are unable to fund.
- Pupils' sensory needs are well considered with some pupils having "Early passes" out of lessons to avoid busy, congested periods in corridors. At lunchtimes a range of provision is in place for pupils who may struggle with the busy dining area e.g. indoor mindfulness colouring, computer suite, library, outdoor sports.
- There is a thorough system of data analysis and pupil progress meetings which ensure that all students' needs are identified and that any students who are not progressing as expected are highlighted and targeted for appropriate interventions.
- Y6 to Y7 is given high priority with positive relationships with feeder primaries in place and a range of activities well planned to support a smooth transition for pupils starting the school.

Next Steps:

- There are no significant areas for development. The school shows exemplary practice in enacting its Inclusive ethos and practice.



Element 2 – The Learning Environment, Resources and ICT

- Collaborative learning environments evident in each classroom supporting group discussion.
- School leaders and Learning Managers have a regular and ongoing presence across the whole school learning environment every day. This impacts positively on all aspects of school life, with informal monitoring ensuring any support around the quality of teaching and learning is given, as well as enhancing relationships and ensuring pastoral issues are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- The Base and specialist ASC classroom offer a calm space with opportunities for sensory regulation.
- Deep leadership role created this year to develop use of resources to support students with SEND.
- The school's website is informative, engaging and interactive. It is a resource that is used by all members of the school's community.

Next Steps:

- Consider using online programmes such as “Flash Academy” as a resource to support students with EAL.



Element 3 – Learner Attitudes, Values and Personal Development

- The explicit behaviour systems are well understood by all stakeholders and are consistently applied at all levels. High quality visuals throughout the school reinforce expectations.
- Students are very clear on what is expected of them and they feel very well supported by it. There is a very positive, happy atmosphere in the school and there is mutual respect between staff and students.
- The school culture includes a strong commitment to student voice.
- Life lessons ensure a broad SMSC / PHSE curriculum is covered, including e-safety, SRE, finance, anti-bullying, identity and self-esteem as well as wider scale global issues such as poverty.
- Mental Health and Well-being of all - both staff and students - is given high priority across the academy. Wellbeing opportunities are regularly used, such as wellbeing assemblies for students, with hot chocolate and games, with the simple objective of injecting fun into the day! Issues such as sexuality for example are openly acknowledged with posters about the LGBT community displayed around the school.
- Staff wellbeing is also high on the agenda. Staff talk positively about leaders caring and truly valuing their wellbeing. Policies are in place, such as no emails on an evening or weekend – as well as informal acts such as thank yous or sweets and chocolate left on desks.
- The school works very hard to create an environment where everyone can learn in an atmosphere of mutual support and respect. The school's inclusive values are reinforced during lessons, in extracurricular activities and in the playground.
- Improving attendance is a key priority for the academy. A revised, strategic approach to improving attendance is in place, with a balance of challenge and support and a big focus on rewards and incentives.

Next steps:

- Throughout the Covid pandemic and beyond, continue to seek creative solutions to reduce exclusions and improve attendance and engagement.



Element 4 – Learner Progress and the Impact on Learning

- Leaders are rigorous in the tracking of pupil progress, ensuring no student is left behind, planning timely action and interventions to address any concerns. Outcomes are on an upward trend. 81% of pupils received 4+ in English last year and outcomes for HA pupils have increased.
- The consistently applied “Demonstrate and Connect” process has had significant impact on learner progress. The “demonstrate” element can be written or performed, then teacher assesses and also pupils self-assess or peer assessment is also used and this connects to a “connect task” which could be a next step challenge or further scaffold. This has led to more bespoke, targeted teaching, supporting individual learners.
- Access arrangements for pupils with SEND are in place as needs are identified earlier on in school.
- Question Level Analysis is used consistently following any assessments to target bespoke learning.
- Aspire and Challenge targets used in all lessons.

Next steps:

- Consider using specific SEND assessment tools to demonstrate small steps of progress e.g. Thrive assessment for SEMH, AET tool for Autism.



Element 5 – Teaching and Learning

- Daily learning walks carried out by SLT ensure rigorous monitoring in the quality of Teaching & Learning.
- Clear and explicit Learning Objectives and focus in each lesson.
- Weekly CPD programme has a focus on Teaching & Learning.
- CPD/professional development objectives relate to T&L.
- Flexible schemes of work are encouraged to enable lessons to be adaptable to the needs of the class or individual students.
- Differentiation is integral to all planning.
- Newly appointed SENCO is having impact on quality of teaching for learners with SEND.
- Deep leadership role has been created this year to focus on the pedagogy of Teaching Assistants and specific teaching strategies.
- One page profiles in place for identified pupils which enable teachers to better meet needs within lessons.

Next steps:

- Consider using the “Maximising the impact of TAs” (MITA) project recommendations to support in developing TA pedagogy.



Element 6 – Parents, Carers and Guardians

- Parent views of the academy have significantly improved over recent years. Parents spoken to during the assessment were wholly positive.
- Parents have a wide range of opportunities to be involved in their child's school life, including:
 - ✓ School Comms.
 - ✓ Parents evenings.
 - ✓ Coffee mornings.
 - ✓ School productions/events.
 - ✓ 3 data collections per year.
 - ✓ Open days/evenings.
 - ✓ Y6 parents evening.
 - ✓ Y7 'settling in' evening.
 - ✓ Y11 information evenings.
 - ✓ Learning Managers are none teaching enabling easy access for parents as a first point of contact.
 - ✓ Celebration evenings.
 - ✓ KS4 and KS5 opportunities evening.
 - ✓ Y8 options evening.
- The SENDCO involves parents in all aspects of SEND, including SEND plans, EHCP reviews and health care plans.
- Pupil numbers have increased which demonstrates parents' confidence in the school.
- Increased attendance at parents' evenings suggests that parents value the school.



Element 7 - External Validation

- The Governing Body is very involved in the life of the school: they provide appropriate support and challenge to the school and share its inclusive values and high aspirations for all students. Governors are clear that the “Changing lives” ethos is permeated throughout all that goes on within the academy and has had significant impact upon outcomes.
- Governors are committed to an inclusive ethos that promotes learning and achievement for all and they hold senior leaders to account on academic and pastoral outcomes of student progress.
- Governors engage with inclusion and attend events in school.
- Governors approve and oversee all inclusion policies.
- Delta Academies Trust are kept informed of progress, through minutes of the governors’ meetings.
- External reviews are highly valued e.g. pupil premium reviews.

Next Steps:

- Further develop the numbers on the governing body.



Element 8 - Links with Local, Wider and Global Community

- The school is firmly placed at the heart of the community. During the recent floods in the local area, Don Valley academy became the community distribution hub, securing over £50,000 of food for local families. They co-ordinated to relief support, ensuring families within the local community were supported in whatever ways possible, offering food, clothes and emotional support.
- Opportunities are developed for children to access a wide range of enrichment activities.
- Students access alternative provision where it enhances their learning.
- Local employers and training providers work with students and parents (Aspirational evenings, Careers days).
- The local community are invited into school for coffee mornings and other events these are all organised by students and the residents are served refreshments and food by the students.
- Students visit local elderly peoples' homes and prepare food hampers for them.
- Residents in the community have commented on how welcoming the Academy is and how polite the students are.