



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



School Name Low Hall Nursery School
Low Hall Lane
Walthamstow
London
E17 8BE

Head/Principal Helen Currie

IQM Lead Pat English

Date of Review 20th May 2026

Assessor Ms Lucy Ciantanni

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group Drive to Thrive

Ambassador Dr Kenny Frederick

Next Meeting TBC

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2025	8 th Oct 2025	No
Spring 2026	20 th Jan 2026	No
Summer 2026	22 nd Apr 2026	No

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

Low Hall has attended the Cluster Meeting at Oasis Pinewood in March of 2025 but has not attended any since then.

The importance of participation in the Cluster group meetings was discussed with both the SENDCo and the Executive Headteacher who agreed that attendance would be prioritised going forward.



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Evidence

- IQM Centre of Excellence Review and Action Plan documentation
- School Website and policies
- Ofsted Report – October 2023
- School Development Plan
- Curricular Goals
- Curricular Aspirations
- Calendar of Artists
- FANS* Learning Library (online)
- Book Looks (Special Books)

*Forest Alliance of Nursery Schools

Additional Activities

- Curriculum and assessment discussion with AHT & Executive Headteacher (EHT)
- Learning Walk
- Observation of “Together Time”
- Observation of Colourful Semantics
- Observation of Bucket Time
- Meeting with SENDCo
- Meeting with local partner in the community
- Phone conversation with Early Years SEND advisor (Waltham Forest)
- Phone conversation with SEND governor.
- Phone conversations with parents.



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Evaluation of Targets for last 12 Months

Target 1: To develop our SEND practice in partnership with Waltham Forest LA.

The SEND practice at Low Hall does not just encompass the way children are taught, but a plethora of support both from the dedicated team here and services provided by the LA. Children with the most complex needs are not only supported in school but referred on to other services within the borough such as speech and language, Early Help and the local MASH team as well as applying to the local special school as necessary. SEND practice also focuses around applying for EHCPs for all children who need one.

Parents speak highly of the support available for them and their children, with one praising how the nursery has helped her child become “more independent and able to play on her own,” with another parent telling me “Low Hall Nursery has a special place in my heart as it has been so very, very supportive.”

Low Hall has supported over 12 children with complex needs at the school, working in partnership with the borough and the Early Years Inclusion Pathway.

The SENDCo told me that the use of the local speech and language therapy service, autism assessments and hearing tests all mean that “children with limited language have a voice and the ability to communicate with others.” This is something that is greatly appreciated by parents who say that “all kids get equal quality of education” noting the support that is in place for all.

Next Steps:

Sadly, the funding for supporting the children with the most complex needs will be stopped however, as the SEND governor stated, “they fight for the children here” and, so in practice, this will mean that the work developed as part of this target will continue as appropriate. The aim of this target is to ensure that all vulnerable children have an “individual package of care” and this will continue on into the future.

Target 2: To share our curriculum with other settings

The Ofsted report of October 2023 states that there is a “clear and ambitious curriculum with goals for all children” and the school has continued to build on this and share it with other local settings. Low Hall works closely with two different settings in the West Walthamstow partnership, creating bespoke curriculum models for them and helping them to develop their learning environments. Low Hall has generously shared their own curricular goals and aspirations to help them, and whilst doing so, has taken the opportunity to re-assess and update them, as necessary.

Next Steps:

Support for at least two other schools in the West Walthamstow Partnership will be ongoing for a number of years to come. It is also hoped that the curriculum will be shared at a national level.



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Target 3: To develop our professional development options for our staff team

Staff at the school speak really highly of the CPD provided and all are confident in the way they work and plan for the children. Some of actions planned for under this target involve trips to other outstanding settings and the creation of a library of “read, watch and listen” articles arising out of suggestions given by the team. The “FANS Learning Library” was shown as evidence and there are many different topics included to support staff CPD – these included neurodiversity and autism, as well as information around further training opportunities across the borough. The Learning Library is online, and staff are able to access it directly from their iPads.

The SEND team has recently completed training in topics such as Sensory Awareness and Nurturing Relationships.

Leaders at Low Hall have felt it important to allow staff to have more ownership in what they learn in order to help them have a greater impact on the development and support of all pupils. Training is, therefore, based on a survey of their learning needs and then planned accordingly – for example, this year there is an emphasis on Colourful Semantics and ShREC.

Next Steps:

Leaders at the school are planning to continue work on further developing quality CPD for all staff and will continue to ensure quality material in the Learning Library.

Agreed Targets for next 12 Months

Target 1: To extend the knowledge and skills of the whole staff team regarding SEND.

The SDP has a series of “Big Questions” for leaders to work towards and this target links to the Big Question “What specialisms will we offer children and families?” Leaders at the school are acutely aware that things change all the time and so constantly strive to find accurate, up to date information, supported by research. This will then be personalised to the school and shared with staff at INSET.

As previously mentioned, it is felt important that staff have ownership of their personal development and it will be an ongoing action for staff to conduct self-monitoring exercises in order to identify areas of strength and weakness in working with children with SEND.

Target 2: To raise the aspirations and life opportunities of our poorest families.

This target links to the Big Question; “ How do we embed our partnerships with parents, local communities and other organisations?” and one of the stated school values of “all families matter.”



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The SENDCo at Low Hall is rightly proud of knowing each child as an individual and always works to develop excellent relationships with families. This included knowing and understanding their social needs as well as educational aspirations, consequently, the school will work with the LA to identify any parents who were looked after children themselves (PLAC) or children classed as EYPP. Experience has shown that PLAC parents are often amongst the poorest families and this target was chosen to ensure this is kept at the forefront when planning to support families.

There is a real drive on cultural capital and raising aspirations at Low Hall and EYPP families are targeted for more additional trips as well being encouraged to join the local library or being given information about places to visit with little or no cost.

Target 3: To identify early any support the family might need.

This target again links to the Big Question; “ How do we embed our partnerships with parents, local communities and other organisations?” and one of the stated school values of “all families matter.”

The SENDCo at the school offer home visits for children with complex needs to see what additional help they can offer. This kind of support ranges from the simple loan of nursery books or toys to more unusual forms of support. An excellent example of the type of support the nursery will offer is shown in the case of a parent with cancer who will sometimes need time to rest/recover from treatment. The nursery identified this early on and allows her child to stay at the nursery free of charge in order to give her this opportunity and lift the burden from her shoulders. This is just one way in which Low Hall ensures all children are included in school life, whatever the need.

Target 4: To build on carers and parents wellbeing and developing their confidence to return to the workplace.

Once again, this target links to the Big Question; “ How do we embed our partnerships with parents, local communities and other organisations?” and one of the stated school values of “all families matter.”

Low Hall believes that it is important to help support parents back into work as much as possible. Lots of the parents have the opportunity to volunteer at the school and this helps them develop their confidence and skills. Some parents can feel very socially isolated, especially if they are parents of children with SEND, so supporting them back into work will be excellent for them and their personal development, which in turn, will be a positive outcome for their children.



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Overview

The Executive Headteacher at Low Hall is rightly proud of the work she leads here and of her staff team. She shared that her vision is for the school to become a hub for the Early Years community and that she is most proud of the fact that “children who aren’t welcome anywhere else, come in and make fabulous progress, with families feeling that their child is seen and heard.” This pride was borne out everywhere throughout the day at Low Hall, in every conversation had and every observation made.

Low Hall Nursery School believes in equity and meeting the individual needs of individual children as per their starting points, as the Ofsted report back in October 2023 stated; “whatever their starting points children achieve highly.”

The school’s inclusive values are advertised widely, with “a warm welcome for every child” assured and all children being treated with “kindness, respect, and equity. This value was clearly displayed in a curriculum and assessment discussion the EHT and AHT when they explained to me that the curriculum in place previously had been very linear and therefore felt very “ablest” as not all children could move up the assessment levels in a linear way and, as such, not all children could be included in the assessment that was in place.

It is believed wholeheartedly at the school that SEND children can have success, but this was not being represented in the curriculum goals previously in place. As a result of a lot of hard work the school now has a more inclusive curriculum and assessment system in place with children being assessed against “I can” statements.

The language of assessment has also changed from goals to aspirations and from milestones to insights. In this way both school and parents can see exactly how a child is developing and what they can do – it is an excellent way to value what all children for their individual development and progress.

Curricular aspirations are the specific things which are assessed but they also teach many other things as well – for example work on recipes is not just about cooking, it feeds into maths and science development, with all children having the opportunity to learn about measuring out ingredients and seeing how they change from one state to another. Inclusion is considered here too, and recipe bags are sent home with children so families who may not necessarily have the resources to do so are able to cook (and learn) together

It was delightful to observe excellent practise in the school watching Together Time, Bucket Time and Colourful Semantics. These focussed activities were for all children, not simply those with SEND and all children were confident, keen and eager to be involved. One child with SEND clearly felt so safe and confident in the setting at Low Hall, that she took me by the hand, keen to involve me in her play.

Staff use sign as well as words and visual prompts when working with the children so that they are all able to understand and communicate when they are working together.



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There is a Creative Curriculum in place at the school which has been developed over two years and ensures inclusion for all. This includes a calendar of artists with careful consideration being given as to which artists are featured – leaders wanting, for example, to ensure at least half of the artists are women who are still alive and/or of different ethnicities, with artists also being a mixture of able bodied/disabled, so that all children in the school can see themselves represented somewhere. Children see videos of the featured artists talking about their work and art activities have been adapted to give children the opportunity to create their own artwork in the same style.

Each child has a “special book” which includes formal observations, assessments against the curricular goals and examples of their work, including artwork, number work, pictures of them on World Book Day and so on. This type of practise is typical of such an inclusive school that it was difficult to see any differences in expectations of each child, whether a child with SEND or not.

Resources in the school are all of a high quality and stories are chosen carefully to try to ensure all children can see themselves somewhere in them. Staff at the school all wear lanyards with visual cues on them in order to help all children understand the plans for the day, but these are particularly helpful for some children with SEND.

The school website states that “play is a right not a privilege” and “all play is valid,” this is borne out by the agreed pedagogy of the school which is child-initiated and play based, with high quality interactions with adults. Such high-quality interactions are leading to confident children who choose to play as they will, and this child-directed play is not interrupted by adults, but rather supported and nurtured. The adults in the school also provide a continuous provision of play and focussed activities.

The outdoor space at Low Hall is a key learning space for the children, with singing, games, drawing and other focussed play activities taking place. It was an absolute pleasure to watch several “Bucket Time” sessions and seeing just how engaged the children were and how well they were all able to focus on the resources being used, this included enjoying the creation of “musical rain” and cutting shapes into flour which fascinated them. All spaces, indoor and outdoors in the school are inclusive spaces and it is testament to the ethos, values, and expertise of the team at Low Hall that it was difficult for me to pick out any but the most complex of SEND children as I observed them engrossed in their activities.

The Ofsted report of October 2023 noted “positive and kind relationships” and this is still true today. All children were treated kindly and respectfully throughout the day and were responding well to this, clearly happy to be in school.

The SENDCo shared that the school is “recommended by other professionals to parents” and that “we never wait for funding, we just put in what is needed as soon as we know.” As a result, the parents/carers spoken to were effusive in their praise of the school’s ethos of inclusion. One parent shared how delighted she is with the support the school has offered her and her child and how grateful she is that the SENDCo has supported her in starting the EHCP process. A Carer told me how helpful and supportive the school has been to her and that she “sees all children go in happy and come out happy.” She also



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stated that people come from “far and wide” to ensure their child(ren) can attend such an inclusive provision.

Another of the school values is “experts working together” and the assessor had the opportunity to meet with a local partner in the community who runs an organisation called Kind Welcome. Kind Welcome offers a food bank and crisis loans, as well as signposting parents to other organisations for support. One member of staff from the school attends on a weekly basis and advises families, showing them respect and dignity. It was shared that “families come in really downcast and leave feeling super supported.”

A phone conversation with the EY SEND Advisor for Waltham Forest who explained that the school was “naturally very inclusive” and the SENDCo’s ethos is excellent, making sure support is in place, whilst all staff are “very warm and open to discussion and new ideas.” The advisor finished by sharing that “all children are included and she is always most impressed with in the moment planning.” This is testament to not only the whole school ethos, but staff dedication, expertise and CPD put in place by leaders.

Finally, the assessor had the opportunity to speak with the SEND governor who communicated that the school never says no to a child and offers whatever is necessary to accommodate his or her needs. She was very clear on the reasons behind the development of the new curriculum and fully supportive of this as a governor. She was keen to point out that staff had been very well trained and that the way they interact with the children is “beautiful” – something that was certainly observed by the assessor that day. These are just some of the examples of the excellent outreach and impact that this inclusive school has on the pupils and the wider community.

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 Centre of Excellence. I therefore recommend that the school retains its Centre of Excellence 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 Centre of Excellence status.

Assessor: Ms Lucy Ciantanni

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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