



# Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd

2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015

Mr Dave Erskine  
Southlands School  
North Shields  
NE30 2QR

**Assessment Date: 25<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

## Summary

Southland's provides an outstanding education for all the young people it supports and sees inclusivity as central to its aims, ideology and practice. Thus, the use of evidence of what pupils need to succeed and play an active part in society is a dominant force in the way the school articulates its approach. What is clearly evident is the commitment to a personalised education and a very strong emphasis on the ability of all pupils, no matter what their level of needs are, to succeed academically and to successfully move on to the next stage in their life. Together, this helps to provide a very inclusive, safe, secure and highly enriching environment that fully meets the needs of their often complex and varied intakes.

The school is also exceptionally supportive of parents and carers as well as striving to be at the centre of its community. All the staff are committed to ensuring that pupils make the best of their time at the school and move on to further education in a very positive way. Within this environment, pupils are very secure in making their views known and grow in confidence and self-esteem as they move through the school. These aspirations are exceptionally well supported by the school's status within the community, including youth club provision and links with other mainstream schools and colleges. The school also uses the school building to very good effect in providing for a full range of academic and practical activities to support the needs of pupils.

The Head Teacher, governors, senior staff and the very motivated teams of teachers and support staff of the school all work very hard to ensure that the provision is inclusive, appropriate, rewarding and exciting. Together, they provide a successful and welcoming environment and this was clearly evident throughout the whole day of the inclusion assessment. There are also excellent systems in place to support other schools in managing pupils with special educational needs.

I am of the opinion, therefore that the school fully meets the standards required by the Inclusion Quality Mark. There are only minor areas requiring development and the school is aware of these. I recommend that the school be awarded the Mark and be assessed in 3 years' time.

**Assessor: Dr John Hill**

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

## Element 1 -

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Joe McCann MBA NPQH  
Director of Inclusion Quality Mark Ltd

### **The Inclusion Values and Practice of the School**

#### Strengths:-

Southlands is an 11-16 mixed gender secondary special school that provides education mainly for pupils with moderate learning difficulties as well as some who are on the autistic spectrum. Alongside the main pupil population there are also a smaller group of pupils who have additional challenging needs and are part of a specific provision managed by the deputy headteacher. All pupils have either a statement of special educational needs or are in the process of moving towards Education, Health and Care Plans. The school caters for pupils who are mainly resident in North Tyneside and there are currently 106 pupils on roll. The vast majority of pupils are from White, British Heritage and about half of the pupils are in receipt of the pupil premium.

Southlands was last inspected in November 2013 and was rated 'good' overall by Ofsted. Over the period since the inspection the school has clear evidence that the issues highlighted by Ofsted have been fully addressed and they have continued to see inclusion as a key whole school priority.

From the documentation provided and evidence gained prior and throughout the day of the IQM assessment it is evident that the school provides excellent inclusive opportunities for pupils to thrive and make progress across the whole school and specifically for everyone to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. It is also clear that the systems they have in place for monitoring the progress of pupils is very thorough. Thus, discussions, observations and policies clearly highlight the way that this inclusive theme is embedded within the ethos of the school. However, it was also evident from the documentation provided that the school does understate this central focus and what the many achievements and outcomes are that surround it.

Philosophically and practically Southlands views educational inclusion as being about equal opportunities, access, achievement, respect and well-being. Indeed, in seeking to retain the IQM Quality Mark for the third time the school is able to show how it is very supportive to all the young people on roll and ensures that it is at the heart of the local community, including having strong partnerships with local schools as well as commissioned services on behalf of the local authority. Fundamentally, however, the school approaches the notion of inclusion by encouraging pupils to gain confidence by providing them all with the opportunity to read, write, speak, and listen and to become independent and self-motivated. Indeed, conversations with senior managers and staff across the school highlight the way the school sees this as a central inclusive goal. Taken together, these are an impressive set of inclusive goals and are ones in which the school is determined to continue to fulfil and to expand upon.

#### Strengths

- A very clear inclusive ethos, centred on access for all pupils to achieve well and play a part in the local community.
- Rigorous and effective self-evaluation in all areas of the school.

## Element 2 -

- High commitment, teamwork and skill level of all staff.

### Areas for development:-

- Seek to articulate more clearly the inclusive achievements of the school.

### **The Learning Environment, Resources and ICT**

Southlands is a single storey building that was built in the late 1960s. It is very well maintained and has been adapted over recent years to fully meet the needs of its secondary provision, including a range of specialist rooms, areas and facilities. There is also a large newly built area of the school which has been very effectively integrated into the whole school premises and in which specialist services located in the school are based, including the school nurse, speech and language therapist and the outreach dyslexia service.

Thus, each class base has appropriate, and generally large spaces to support whole group and individual teaching, with appropriate furniture to help pupils use the space to the best effect. There are also a range of spaces around the school for 1:1 and small groups lessons as well as a good size hall that doubles up for sports, assembly and lunch provision. Unlike many special schools, storage at present is not a problem and pupils have suitable spaces to walk around. Moreover, the bright and wide corridors with subdued colours provide a calm atmosphere for pupils and are very well maintained.

Around the school there are many and varied positive displays, often linking with the local community as well as highlighting the work that goes on in classrooms and beyond, including examples of pupils' work. There are also many well-kept examples of what pupils are doing in classroom. Externally, there are a number of very well designed hard and grassed areas as well as an extensive garden, small animal and horticulture spaces which form part of the Key stage 4 practical provision in growing crops and looking after animals. The school is also able to share, when appropriate, larger external sports' areas with a local school.

In terms of ICT, and supporting resources, all classrooms have up to date functioning and well-used white boards as well as access to computers and laptops. This includes the new library facility that has an interactive large touch screen that allows students to take a part in practical group work. The school is also fully wireless and has recently bought 12 android devices to give wider access to online learning and research. Older pupils are allowed to use personal wireless devices in school and sign a contract regarding their safe use. Indeed, I was able to witness this responsible use during a lunchtime youth club activity for older pupils.

Overall the school's building and resources fully support the inclusive aims of the staff.

### Strengths:-

- Fantastic use of both indoor and outdoor space to support pupils' learning.
- Very good use of local, community facilities.

## **Element 3 -**

- The use of the building for many and varied after school clubs.

### Areas for development:-

- There are no significant areas for development.

## **Learning Attitudes, Values and Personal Development**

During the day of the assessment, at lessons, at break-times and at lunch, pupils were engaged, responsive and friendly. Their behaviour at all times was respectful and cooperative to both their peers and classmates and this reinforced the view of Ofsted (November 2013) who noted that “behaviour is good both inside and outside the classroom. All students show courteous and considerate attitudes to staff, visitors and each other.” This attitude indeed was exemplified during the lunch-time drop in club for older pupils where pupils were clearly at ease with one another and were very respectful to the school mentor who led the session. This reinforces the view of the school’s IQM documentation that bullying is extremely rare in the school. It further highlights a major reason why attendance is so high, namely that coming to Southlands is a happy, supportive and productive experience.

Thus within this close, inclusive community pupils are exceptionally well supported to be safe both in terms of their medical needs, personal safety, through being made aware of esafety. This is also the case in respect of the adults within classes who support them by helping to ensure their well-being and encouraging and supporting a very well developed system of a ‘behaviour learning league’ that provides pupils with opportunities to earn rewards, including, e.g. shopping vouchers, games tokens and tickets to watch Newcastle United.

The school is also always willing to act on the views of pupils via the school council. Class and year group assemblies further contribute to the family atmosphere of the school in celebrating all kinds of pupil achievements and pupils are encouraged to participate in a variety of communal activities, including, for example, accessing school trips, outings and residential opportunities, including for older pupils the Duke of Edinburgh scheme as well as participating in school plays, and when they are older attending college and work experience. Pupils are further encouraged to take part in regular questionnaires and surveys to canvas their views on the school.

The school also runs its own youth club, and following the decision of the local authority to terminate its funding, the school takes full responsibility for every aspect of its management. This highly successful provision that runs twice weekly allows pupils to mix socially after school both with each other and, for one of the sessions with local young people in the area. This outstanding inclusive provision also supports the delivery and coordination of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme where students are able to undertake both bronze and silver awards.

### Strengths:-

## **Element 4 -**

- Many and varied opportunities for the development of personal and social skills in and outside of school hours
- Providing pupils with the confidence to always do their best and to be safe.

### Areas for development:-

- There are no significant areas for development.

## **Learner Progress and the Impact on Learning**

The level of pupil abilities at Southlands ranges from the upper 'P' levels up to about level 3 at the older end of the school. In order to assess pupil progress, the school very efficiently uses a commercial scheme, PIVATS to provide suitable progress targets. The senior teacher who leads on this aspect of the school also effectively refers to the Ofsted national progression guidelines to support analysis in this area. This sophisticated approach to analysis highlights how most pupils achieve a very high level of progress. Such data, moreover, is regularly and very effectively collated, analysed and shared and used as evidence in discussions with pupils, parents and carers, staff, other professionals as well as with other institutions, e.g. at transition to college. Specifically, the school has sought to build on the recommendations of the last Ofsted report and has spent much time in further developing their skills in the area of tracking pupil progress.

In particular, as was evident throughout the day of the assessment, that pupils are encouraged and supported to do their best and acquire skills across a range of subjects, but specifically, as a base, in literacy and numeracy. This emphasis starts for the youngest age groups in terms of supporting their development through specific 1:1 and small group programmes, e.g., Read, Write, Inc, and for older pupils the promotion of functional skills and the preparation for college and life after school. Ofsted (November 2013), indeed supports the view that from low starting points pupils across the school make outstanding progress, noting that "students start school with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age....and ....from these low starting points make good and sometimes better progress."

Observations and discussions with pupils further highlighted pupils' enthusiasm to learn. Lessons are very well structured and timetabled to allow for individual pupils to get the most out of them. The close relationships and support from staff means they know what the pupils need to improve. Staff also take every opportunity to help pupils become independent and express their views. They are also aware of the influence of the locality in supporting their learning and, for example, visit local shops and amenities on a regular basis, and as they get older take part in projects in the community. In particular, the emphasis on communication is a key inclusion driver in promoting the ability of pupils to converse with one another and in the outside world, a point that was clearly made to me when meeting with parents during the day of the assessment.

### Strengths:-

- Very thorough systems for assessment.

## Element 5 -

- Very effective use of pupil progress data.
- Very well developed systems for sharing pupil progress data with staff and parents and carers.
- An emphasis on ensuring that all pupil populations make suitable progress in literacy and numeracy.

## Areas for development

- Continue to review pupil progress targets and outcomes in line with national recommendations.

### **Learning and Teaching (Monitoring)**

The last Ofsted report of November 2013 highlighted that the vast majority of lessons observed “was good or better and evidence seen in students’ books and the school’s records further support the school’s view that the quality of teaching is good over time.” Evidence for this judgment, as also witnessed during the day of the assessment, can be seen in the way that there is a consistency across the school in terms of the way tasks are set, the skilled support for different pupil populations, the confidence of pupils to speak and share ideas and in particular the way that emphasis is placed on developing literacy and numeracy skills.

Positive examples of this emphasis on basic skills is clearly evident in the use, for example of the development of writing skills, which are clearly evident in some of the displays around the school. Indeed, engagement with pupils on improving their ability to make progress in basic skills is seen as being fundamental to the school’s inclusive ethos and evidence that this was the case was evident in all conversations with staff and pupils during the day of the assessment. This ideology is also apparent throughout key stage 4 where there is a strong emphasis on ‘employability’ with a number of options available as part of their ‘Moving On Project’ in Key stage 4 and in links with local colleges as well as through transition.

The careful monitoring and evaluation of what is provided for the pupils also adds to the confidence of parents and carers that their child is being given the very best that is available. An outstanding relationship between staff and pupils further gives confidence and pride to the achievements that are made. This is evident in the provision provided by the school in e.g. the many and varied after school clubs. There are also very well defined staffing structures with support staff and other professionals working alongside teaching staff. The head teacher and senior staff carefully monitor all aspects of the school day and adapt appropriately if things need changing.

Systems for school management are also very effective for the orderly running of the school and the day-to-day routines are very well established. Communication between staff is very good and effective teamwork is clearly evident. Teachers, support and other staff, including a speech and language specialist on site and access to connexions specialists as well as linking with the dyslexia support service on site, play a very important role in developing pupils’

## **Element 6 -**

independent skills and employ a range of strategies to make sure that each individual's need is effectively met. Evidence observed from walking around the school during the assessment and discussions with pupils clearly highlighted the positive way that pupils interacted with one another.

### Strengths:-

A highly organised approach to teaching and learning:-

- A very skilled and adaptable staff group.
- A very successful approach to the teaching of literacy, numeracy and transition to post 16.

### Areas for development:-

- There are no significant areas for development.

## **Assessor's Comments: Element 6 - Parents, Carers and Guardians**

The school works extremely hard to involve all parents and carers in their children's learning. This includes e.g. home school diaries, newsletters, meetings and reviews, events and productions, parents' and carers' evenings, achievement days, Christmas productions, sports' day and charity fund raising activities. Opportunities to meet with other, external agencies, e.g. CAMHS, Connexions and Speech and Language Therapy and the dyslexia service are also provided at parents' and carers' events and these are very well attended. Additionally, the school regularly asks and acts on the opinion of parents through questionnaires, and the positive outcome of these was reinforced during the last Ofsted inspection of Nov 2013.

This high level of satisfaction was reinforced during the day of the assessment in meetings with two parents and one grandparent. All spoke very highly of the opportunities that the school provides for their children, including supporting them in their basic skills, gaining in confidence, being secure in themselves and, as they get older, being provided with the opportunity to take part in a number of employment based skills via the 'Moving On Project' as well as attending colleges and potentially mainstream schools as part of their inclusion programme. They also expressed the view that they can ring up at any time if they have a concern and that they are always welcome at the school. Taken together, it is hard not to agree with the Ofsted (June 2014) that "parents and carers are overwhelmingly pleased with their children's education."

In further developing relationships with parents and carers, the school has sought to include them in planning for and understanding the progress of their children as they move through the school, including termly reports of how well their child is doing. Parents I met during the day of the assessment were also very appreciative of the many after school opportunities provided including access to the twice weekly youth club.

### Strengths:-

- Excellent communication links with parents.
- The school ensures that it knows the views of parents and carers.
- Parents and carers are actively encouraged to support the learning experiences of their child.

### Areas for development:-

- There are no significant areas for development.

## **Assessor's Comments: Element 7 - Governing Body and Management**

There is a full complement of governors, including three new parent governors at Southlands and they play a very active role in the running of the school. It was also clear from the discussions on the day of the assessment with two members of the governing body that governors were very passionate about the school and some have had very long-term

commitments to it. They also expressed a clear understanding and knowledge of what the school is trying to achieve, and specifically within an inclusive ideology. Indeed, they are very clear in their role as a 'critical friend,' and play an active role in determining the longterm direction and ethos of the school. Ofsted (November 2013), indeed specifically noted the work of the governing body as "having a range of skills which means they offer effective support and challenge to senior leaders."

Governors also engage in regular visits to both schools, to link with subject coordinators, go into classrooms and to discuss and report back on what they have seen. As part of this and in support of the inclusive nature of the school they take every opportunity to ask parents and carers their views of the school and how well they thought their child was progressing. The governing body are also very aware of the impact of the changes in the school population over time and the potential they have as a service provider and in links with mainstream. As a result, and alongside the senior leadership team, they are making every effort to plan for the longer term.

In partnership with the governing body the senior leadership of the school, as highlighted by Ofsted (November 2013) "continue to bring about improvement in all areas of the school. Their clear focus has ensured that teaching and students' achievement have improved." Discussions during the day of the assessment with the head and deputy teacher and other senior staff clearly reinforced this view and highlighted a very powerful inclusive ideology that sought to get the very best from all pupils no matter what their need. This emphasis on rigour can be seen everywhere in the school, in lessons, in corridors and at break times. From the inclusion perspective, it was clear throughout the day of the assessment that pupils felt valued and supported and were always encouraged to do their best. In terms of future planning, the senior leaders are further aware of a changing pupil population and to this effect have appointed a deputy head teacher with specific skills in supporting pupils on the autistic spectrum and this is having a positive effect on the way these pupils are managed and engaged with.

### Strengths:-

- A very strong leadership team which has the interests of pupil progress and safety at the centre.
- A very active and effective governing body.
- A supportive and inclusive ideology which permeates the whole school.

### Areas for development:-

- There are no significant areas for development.

## **Element 8 - The School in the Community**

Southlands has developed an excellent range of external links and as a result has a significant range of inclusive activities. In particular, the school holds responsibility for the management

of a commissioned service that is local authority funded to provide a Key Stage 4 vocational curriculum for children with learning difficulties in mainstream schools, and which includes pupils at Southlands. Here opportunities in the 'Moving On Project' provides twice weekly for such as joinery, bicycle maintenance, digital photography gardening, beauty therapy and construction etc. These enterprises moreover are located across North Tyneside in specialist facilities (e.g., health and fitness is located at the NE YACTIVE fitness centre in North Shields and construction is located at TMC (Tyne Met Construction) give excellent opportunities for pupils to experience and gain practical skills prior to going to college at post 16. The pupils, parents and grandparent I talked to on the day of the assessment were all of the opinion that this scheme was an excellent vehicle for future job opportunities. Moreover, in discussions with the senior teacher in charge of the initiative it is apparent that the whole project is exceptionally well organised and provides the very best for a large number of pupils.

At Southlands there are also excellent facilities for horticulture, which is very well established. Here pupils from the school, as well as some from other local secondary schools, get the opportunity to have practical experience with growing crops and caring for animals. The grounds are, without doubt, a really excellent facility and of which the staff are very proud. In further linking with other schools to improve opportunities for pupils, the school very effectively employs a designated team of support staff to support pupils in a local secondary school. Here a very good range of academic opportunities in, for example, maths, science and the arts are available for pupils and much success has been gained including a range of GCSE successes up to grade C.

The school also provides a youth facility to young people from the school and community that is always well used. Here, access to the whole community as well as Southlands' pupils is integral to its success and provision is also made for the Duke of Edinburgh award at bronze and silver level. Staff from the school fully support this after school programme and some are employed specifically to facilitate this. Indeed, the excellent community and inclusive use of the premises is further enhanced by a variety of user groups including, Pilates and dance classes as well as access to the fitness suite.

### Strengths:-

- The way the school fosters extensive and inclusive links with the local community, other schools, and a range of outside providers and local amenities.
- The thorough planning and implementation of the 'Moving On Project.'
- The excellent management use of the horticultural facilities.
- The excellent youth club opportunities available for Southlands' pupils and beyond.

### Areas for development:-

There are no significant areas for development.