



8<sup>th</sup> May 2018

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**Date of COE Review: 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

### **Summary**

This inspirational school caters for pupils aged 3-19 years having a wide range of physical, communication and learning disabilities. Nearly 35% have autism, 29% have physical and medical needs, and 11% have profound and multiple disabilities. This school is a large family in which everybody feels safe and cared for, in which children excluded from other schools are made welcome and begin to thrive, and in which the children and young adults have a voice which genuinely determines the direction of their learning and environment: “Everything we do is child-led”, says the Headteacher, and, “We are grass-roots up, not top-down”. A visitor is struck by the atmosphere of trusting, happy relationships, with the quiet purposeful calm, punctuated occasionally by laughter as staff and pupils, using first names, gently tease each other or share a joke.

Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre is a purpose-built Special School, occupying well-designed and constantly upgraded buildings and grounds, currently having 148 pupils aged between 3 and 19 years old on roll, and expanding year on year in a controlled, resourced programme, with 156 pupils expected in September this year. Nearly all pupils have statements of special educational need, and those without statements are currently undergoing statutory assessment. There are 31 children in the Foundation Stage, and satellite classes are in place for some secondary aged pupils at St. Cenydd's High School (taught by Trinity Fields' teachers) and for some primary aged pupils (also taught by Trinity Fields' teachers) at Cwm Ifor Primary School. In this way, Trinity Fields pupils experience a range of opportunities to develop social skills and self-esteem, to enhance personal skills, interests and talents, while pupils at the mainstream schools benefit from getting to know fellow pupils their own age meeting the challenges of a variety of disabling conditions.

The Inclusivity of Trinity Fields is mirrored also in the management structure. The Senior Leadership Team includes all levels of staff members. Teachers and TAs are given responsibility commensurate with their interests and capabilities: “We see the potential in everybody”, as the Headteacher puts it.

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The school takes development in its stride. The new Curriculum for Wales, “Successful Futures”, is already being incorporated, with pupils involved in the planning. Trinity Fields has a large catchment area, extending beyond County boundaries as its reputation has grown. In addition, the school has a very large proportion of pupils living in disadvantaged households, with 43% of pupils eligible for free school meals. The Council’s policy of targeting families “on benefits” for places at the school attracts a sizeable Pupil Development Grant, which, despite a slight decrease recently, is very effectively deployed. Careful financial management, with particularly strong Local Authority support, has led to well-planned improvements in the buildings and site, creating enhanced outdoor learning facilities and additional indoor teaching spaces. “Expansion is at our pace” says the Headteacher, who feels he has the full support of the CEO. The Headteacher can check the speed of the school’s growth through his membership of the admissions board, so that resources are put in place before the school expands, allowing all new and vulnerable pupils to be properly assimilated.

A notable strength of the school is creativity in solving problems. Each child is seen as an individual. The Headteacher knows “what makes each child tick and what makes each child tock”. Because he and his staff know each child and their family so well, behaviour management, learning opportunities, curricular strengths, personal enthusiasms and home links can all be harnessed for the benefit of the individual.

Trinity Fields benefits from a particularly supportive Local Authority, and there are active local services such as Health, Social Services, Safeguarding and Bereavement counselling which form effective teams around vulnerable families when needed.

Lastly, by all external measures of effectiveness, Trinity Fields pupils achieve remarkably well. They can access GCSE courses, they find college places at 19, they make good progress in THRIVE measures of wellbeing and emotional literacy, they play an active part in the running of the school and they learn skills of independence alongside a genuinely broad and balanced curriculum which opens their eyes to a wider world.

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 COE status. The school is now in its third year of IQM Centre of Excellence, and the new developments described above, in addition to an ever-wider sphere of influence and outreach, now support its ambition to achieve IQM Flagship status.

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



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



## Sources of Data:

- A Tour of the school led by Head Boy and Head Girl. Visit to St Cenydd's High School satellite class. Discussions with the Headteacher, IQM leader, THRIVE practitioner, parent, School Council. Documentation seen included THRIVE pupil assessments, the recent National Categorisation School Report by Local Authority, Headteacher's Briefing Paper for school visit (April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018) by Interim Chief Executive, Cabinet members for Education/Social Care and CEO. Pupil-and-parent friendly leaflets and policy documents, website. School self-evaluations against Action Plans. Displays of photographs of outdoor activities, other displays around school (e.g. emotional literacy, art work etc).

In its previous COE review, the following areas for development were identified:-

- To develop outdoor provisions and learning experiences in the surrounding area.
- Eco schools' development (Green Flag assessment).
- To develop parental engagement and involvement.
- To enhance Inclusion and choice, to develop clubs and extension activities to be incorporated into the school week.
- To work collaboratively with other special schools across the EAS region on a Wellbeing project.
- Transitioning a KS3 Satellite class from Trinity Fields to St Cenydd Community School, Caerphilly.
- Continue to develop bespoke learning packages for pupils that the LA find difficult to place, building upon previous successes.

## Progress with targets:-

- There was much evidence in school (photographs, a summary report and children's accounts) to testify to the success of the "Better Out Than In" project, led by Dr Coral Harper, for all pupils from Nursery to age 19. Pupils have enjoyed making fires in a fire pit, choosing the right (hazel) stick to toast marshmallows, learning names of plants and trees. Pupils report enjoying seeing chicks hatch and holding baby ducklings, and the therapy dog continues to be popular. Staff members report a growth in self-esteem, skills and teamwork in all pupils who have taken part in BOTI. Pupils have also taken modules of the Duke of Edinburgh Award. A beautiful log cabin is now in place, donated by a parent and large enough, with a ramp, to accommodate wheelchairs, and an excellent outdoor learning space, with canopy and safety surface is complete for EYFS.
- The school has achieved its first Green Flag award and is working towards its second. The school is energy-aware and holds "No Paper Days" to bring students' attention to waste reduction. Around school, "switch off the lights" signs are placed in every room.
- New Parent Guides and summaries of policies exemplify a model of clear design and the paring down of information to what is essential and easily assimilated. Policies in pictorial communication language ensure pupils' sense of ownership, and indeed they are discussed with and approved by pupils beforehand, so the presentation is



not just “window-dressing”. It is difficult for the school to attract parents to courses: many parents and carers themselves have special needs and live well beyond the catchment areas expected in mainstream schools. However, courses such as “Signalong”, “The Thrive Approach” and “Sexuality and Relationships” are taking place, and the school hopes and expects that word of mouth among parents will swell numbers in future.

- Inclusion and choice are embedded in the school’s philosophy and working practices. The school continues to demonstrate its “Rights Respecting” ethos in the way pupils are consulted about their own programmes of learning and their own behaviour management systems. Pupil preferences, the school’s knowledge of each child’s home circumstances and the warm family feeling in relationships between adults and pupils make Trinity Fields an outstandingly Inclusive school. One example of this is the new girls’ lunchtime fitness session in the swimming pool, and another is the older students’ insistence on a healthier offer of food at lunchtimes: “There are too many carbs in our school dinners”, said one boy, disapprovingly.
- The school’s partnership work with other schools, both special and mainstream, is truly outstanding. No effort is spared by staff members in driving from one school to another, in offering visits and courses to teachers, TAs and whole staff groups. Trinity Fields leads a group of four special schools in developing pupils’ resilience and mental wellbeing, works closely with its partner mainstream schools and was also represented in the first IQM Cluster group meeting for SW and South-Wales schools.
- The transitioning of a satellite class to the nearest secondary school is now complete, with pupils proud to wear the uniform of their host school and joining in with mainstream pupils of their age at lunchtimes and for some lessons. Two Trinity Fields pupils have achieved Art GCSE and the school is exploring the possibility of other pupils completing this GCSE in the future. One able artist now plans to join his mainstream age group to take art GCSE. For students with ASD to manage this move so happily, and for parents to accept the move too, is a testament to the patient, caring work of the Trinity Fields staff team.
- The school now has two attractive new classrooms to provide additional teaching space, including a beautiful library with good quality “feelings” and multicultural books and Thrive facilities, and a spacious and well-planned outdoor learning area for younger pupils.
- “Thrive” continues to serve the pupils’ social, emotional and communication needs very well, with most pupils making steady, measurable progress. One older boy showed the Assessor his wristband, with an orange “I’m not OK” side, and a green, “I’m OK” side to flip over. He knew several techniques for coping with anger, which had been a problem for him previously.

### Developments for the future:-

- Continue to develop the LA hub and bespoke approach to ALN by developing staff expertise in SRBs: This is work in progress, in collaboration with the LA.



- To achieve National Quality Award for Healthy Schools: The first assessment has now taken place and the school passed, with the report not yet available. The new policy, approved by pupils, is published in “Communicating with symbols” picture language so that it is accessible to all. Sex and relationships education is currently being enhanced, in consultation with parents, and pupils in the School Council on the day of the IQM assessment they were highly aware of the need for a healthy diet and plenty of exercise.
- To further develop the leadership of Outdoor Learning: This is in development, with all pupils taking part in BOTI (Better out than in), a new outdoor wooden cabin for learning groups, and older pupils having taken some modules of the Duke of Edinburgh Award and are now beginning to plan expeditions and overnight camping.
- To develop work experience opportunities in the 14-19 LP classes: Governors have approved a 0.6ft post for a Learning Coach to facilitate work experience and job coaching and expressions of interest have been invited internally. A local candidate would have the advantage of understanding barriers, and being able to use local knowledge and contacts, as well as negotiating the, sometimes complicated, health and safety requirements.
- To further develop parental engagement: The school has re-accredited as an Investors in Family school. A range of parent workshops have taken place (see above), and “Lads and Dads” activities are proving popular. The school works very well with some hard-to-reach parents/carers and continues to be creative in engaging everyone in the family, including siblings, for the benefit of pupils. The daily home-school book is a much-treasured system for keeping daily, open lines of communication. The school’s website is attractive and easy to navigate, and all parents appear to be happy with using their phones to access school notices and newsletters.
- To develop an extended range of pupil-friendly policies: This is already well in hand and will include pupil contributions to the adoption of the new Welsh curriculum. The policy documents and leaflets are an example to all schools of how all pupils and parents can access information easily.
- Improving resources. The school is creative in attracting donations and seeking finding for new projects. The Local Authority is hugely supportive of the school because it has a high regard for the school’s successes with children who have been hard to place elsewhere.
- Enterprise activities include the well-established Cafe Oren and the running, by pupils, of a tuck shop for staff. Orders, through a wholesaler, for vegetables grown in school have been successful for a while. Currently this scheme is not running, through no fault of the school’s.



In addition to the above, the Assessor suggested the following actions leading on from the Action Plan:-

- To enhance the Outdoor Learning provision: older pupils in the School Council say they would love the chance to work with larger animals, especially horses. In some areas, riding for the disabled, and riding and horse care for ASD pupils, are well established and beneficial. The school might like to investigate local fundraising bodies (Rotary etc) and approach existing riding schools to enable this therapeutic activity for selected pupils.
- To enable younger pupils to have regular contact with school pets such as guinea pigs, chickens or goats, to supplement Thrive work and to build self-esteem and skills: clearly, bringing animals into school involves responsibility and holiday care, and is not to be done lightly, but the benefits to some children, especially with ASD, can be enormous. Perhaps this could be an area for the school to investigate: are there any local schools where animal husbandry is well developed and from which Trinity Fields could learn? Would it be possible to create a new post in the future, recognising this responsibility?
- Trinity Fields has attempted contact with an African school, but this can be hard to maintain if technology is not available there for Skyping etc. The Assessor will attempt to broker contact with a school in Ghana which might have the technology and the enthusiasm to pursue a partnership. This does not need to have a fundraising element; it could be purely for education, friendship and mutual understanding.
- Mindfulness and meditation can be very beneficial skills for people of any age who are struggling with stress and anxiety, and they are now available in many schools. Currently, Trinity Fields does not have trained staff to provide this (and full training is important), but it might in the future prove popular with parents/carers as well as being a useful additional skill for pupils to take into adulthood.

**Assessor: Barbara Curry**

**Date of Review: 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018**