



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



Overview

Staff at Nisai have their learners at the centre of all they do. It is a setting of hope and aspiration. An organisation that is dedicated to developing and enhancing inclusive practice.

Staff are committed to an innovative and relentless approach to find ways to break down barriers to enable children to reach their potential and succeed. Leaders have worked hard to create an ambitious and inclusive culture. Their vision to engage, educate and support some of the most vulnerable pupils, across the country and also internationally, is lived and breathed by each staff member. On the review day, the Deputy CEO and COO talked passionately about how they want to ensure a good learning experience for all and that students are at the centre of this organisation. The team looks at what a learner is able to achieve and supports them to get that.

Senior Leaders describe how all students are valued and are supported so that they can all achieve their best. Staff offer children and young people, with a diverse range of additional needs, the opportunity to learn in a supportive online environment, where differences are celebrated, and every pupil is valued and encouraged to achieve their own potential. One leader explained, *'We all learn in different ways and need to access learning in different ways. At Nisai there is a culture of responsibility and we work together to ensure our students can learn, develop and achieve.'*

There is a strong and stable staff team who have all bought into the vision. This setting has genuine collaboration and teamwork embedded in its ethos. Leaders talked with passion about the effective team they have and how staff are happy working there and tend to stay. Many staff have been at the setting for 12, 15 or even 17 years! One leader said, *'I started my Nisai journey and could see the vision and wanted to be part of it. I really love it here!'* The leadership team talked about how the CEO's values, and vision, are deep rooted and embedded and how all staff live and breathe these values. Throughout the review day it was clear that staff are fully committed and supportive of the Nisai vision.

Recruitment and induction processes for new staff, and new roles, are strong. The Chief Operating Officer talked about how they work hard to get the right people working with them, stating *'We ask: are they Nisai? Do they share our values?'* Once staff have been recruited to roles, there are strong processes in place to ensure all new staff fully understand the policies, procedures and ethos of Nisai. These are revisited over time to allow new staff to learn and implement what is required and become confident about life at Nisai. Leaders shared how there is a strong and supportive 'buddy system' to support staff as they work. The leadership team is a reflective team who ensure all staff are included and valued.

Wellbeing needs of staff are taken seriously by leaders and one staff member articulated how leaders consider their workload and put things in place to reduce this. Another staff member shared how they have a good Employment Assistance Programme (EAP) in place that offers things such as counselling, finance support and medical assistance. There is an easy-to-use app for phones and employers can access it whenever they want. One staff member shared, *'This is a great place to work for wellbeing.'*



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The Senior leadership team is highly skilled and experienced. The leadership qualities of the team have created a culture of reflecting and growing. One Senior Teacher explained, *'This is a dynamic place to work. We are always evolving.'*

Relationships across the whole community are embedded and nurtured. Leaders realise that relationships are key to successful outcomes. At Nisai, relationships truly matter. Leaders are never complacent and regularly consult staff, parents/carers and students about how to further improve and develop. This is done through activities such as pupil voice and parent/carer questionnaires. Nisai is a reflective organisation. The purpose to ensure each student can achieve is at the core of everything they do.

Staff seek to support each student's access to a broad and balanced education appropriate to their potential and educational needs. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a range of subjects on offer such as English, Maths, Science, History, PSHE, Sociology, Business Studies. Students can also access employability skills lessons, where they can learn about topics such as building a CV or planning a presentation.

Curriculum progression has been a key focus of the teaching team. Leaders have worked hard to recruit subject specialists, and this has had a positive impact across each curriculum area. Students' can leave Nisai with a wide range of qualifications and a core set of GCSEs and/or A Levels. Due to the international growth of Nisai, leaders are also looking at international qualifications that students can achieve. One parent's feedback captured the impact of Nisai, stating *'Staff give my child the support he has needed for a long time and the results speak for themselves. Nisai is meeting his needs - mentoring and learning, and it's great.'*

Staff have a thorough understanding of the challenges their students and families face and are committed to seeking the right support to provide the most effective impact. Mental health and wellbeing needs are taken seriously by the school and the school has a dedicated team who ensure there is a strong targeted support package for those who need it. The Head of Teaching shared how they consider everything they can do to support and motivate students, updating that they put students into 'houses' and they can earn house points and they also have student of the week and student of the term and also teacher of the week that students can vote on. Students also have a form tutor who is a key person and point of contact. As the team is always reflecting and exploring how to improve, the teaching team is currently trialling the use of webcams so children can see teachers and get to know them more and this will soon become the standard way of working. The leaders are also in the process of developing teacher profiles and pen portraits to go alongside a photo of each individual that will be going on the Nisai website.

Leaders are clear about the vision and next steps for the virtual academy. This is an outward facing organisation who share best practice and are keen to learn from others.

It is clear from the review process that the team at Nisai continue to be fully committed to inclusive practice and they successfully demonstrated the positive impact of their work towards the IQM Centre of Excellence targets over the past 12 months. They have proved their expertise over the years of IQM accreditation and I believe they have the passion and capacity to continue to drive the inclusion agenda in their own setting and



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beyond. Therefore, I recommend that the school retains its Centre of Excellence status. The next review will look closely at how the Leaders have fulfilled the objectives outlined in their Centre of Excellence Action Plan and how they have interacted with the IQM Cluster Group, and other schools locally, nationally and internationally, to promote their inclusive vision and work.

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: Mrs Emily Carr

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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