



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



School Name Nisai Virtual Academy
Third Floor
Victoria House
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Thornaby
Stockton-on-Tees
TS17 6PT

Chief Operating Officer Ms Victoria Reaney

IQM Lead Ms Victoria Reaney

Date of Review 15th March 2024

Assessor Mr Dirk Pittard

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group Inclusivators

Ambassador Ms Rachel Campbell

Next Meeting Summer Term (possibly 1st July - TBC)

Meeting Focus TBC

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Summer 2022	4 th July 2022	No
Autumn 2022	6 th October 2022	No
Spring 2023	26 th April 2023	Yes
Summer 2023	4 th July 2023	Yes
Autumn 2023	6 th October 2023	Yes
Spring 2024	25 th January 2024	No
Summer 2024		

Sources of Evidence during IQM Review Day & Meetings held:

- Ofsted Reports.
- Academy Website and Policies.
- Tour of Academy Building.
- Meeting with IQM Co-ordinator.
- Meeting with Teachers.
- Meeting with Head of Teaching & Learning.



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- Observation of online lessons.
- Meeting with the Customer & Student Support Team Manager and Team Leaders for Exams & Progression, Student Services and EHCP Services to discuss student support.
- IQM Documentation.
- Video Call with the Head of Personalised Learning Support Programme (Mentoring).
- Video Call with the Chair of Governors.
- Video Call with the CEO.



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Summary of Targets from 2021-2022

Target 1: To provide a more pro-active approach for attendance and assignment monitoring for students. They wish to implement new processes for escalations to customers and also be more active in drilling down the data to look for patterns and if it relates to specific subjects or teachers.

Target 2: To provide more interactive and specific reporting data and information to stakeholders by updating and upgrading the Nisai Customer Portal and Nisai Parent Portal. This will allow for more awareness and more focused reports to be shared and to be available. They would also look to review the Customer Referral Form which would enable them to capture data and information from the outset.

Target 3: To continue to work on the analysis and required input for value added data from all areas so they have an overall process and roll out at the end of the academic year.

Comments: Nisai leaders have made significant progress against all of last year's targets and this has had enabled the company to improve attendance, reporting and value for their customers and community.

Agreed Targets for 2022-2023

Target 1: To increase SEN Awareness and collaboration between departments to ensure that all student needs are continued to be identified, understood and supported.

Target 2: To solidify the Virtual Mentoring Provision that is offered as an option for students to provide a support mechanism with confidence, time management, other pastoral requirements and acting as an intermediary for the students and teachers.

Target 3: Redesign and develop a robust CIAG programme, taking into account the needs and aspirations of students.

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

Date of Meeting	Location of Meeting	Topic(s)	Outcome(s) for School
Thursday 25 th January 2024	Green Gates Primary Academy, Redcar	Strength, Challenge and Support	Unable to attend due to prior commitments.
Friday 6 th October 2023	Park End Primary School, Middlesbrough	SEND	Feedback regarding requirements from schools for a primary offer; Lovely to visit Beverley Park and



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	with a visit to Beverley Park		see the new school in action – how focused the children were with the bucket activity
Tuesday 4th July 2023	Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth, Stockton	Staff Wellbeing	Ideas for celebrating staff and achievements; Lots of ideas for resources we could utilise
Wednesday 26th April 2023	Thorntree Academy, Middlesbrough	Attendance; Transition; Intervention	Ideas for parental engagement and getting their 'buy-in'; Ideas on how Nisai could support transition for new students (updating welcome letters, sending Student Guide; Realisation of reliance on own resources/materials, not purchasing programmes/apps etc



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Overview

The Nisai Group is a quality assured education and skills provider focused on transforming the education landscape through blended and inclusive online learning. Nisai is inspected by OFSTED and is an approved Cambridge International School. Nisai are delivering IGCSEs and A-levels across the UK and internationally.

Students come to Nisai because a mainstream education isn't working for them. The Nisai working practices were already well established before the Covid Pandemic so there was a highly effective teaching model in place to build on and I saw this evidenced during my visit.

Nisai currently supports 440 learners in the UK, 80% of whom are in receipt an EHCP.

The Nisai Academy environment is very different to that of a traditional mainstream school. The student learners are remotely taught in small, live classes matched by a similar pace and ability, not necessarily by age. Coupled with highly trained teachers and well-paced online lessons; their learners receive in depth-tuition from their teachers and can interact verbally through the microphone in their headset, through public text chat or, privately, text chat just the teacher.

Pro Active Attendance Monitoring

Nisai has introduced a new attendance monitoring and escalation processes, working closely with its teachers to ensure that this is acted on pro-actively. On a daily basis, they are looking at the data for students who are unauthorised and contacting schools, parents and their customers more proactively.

Attendance is now followed up in greater depth drilling down into the reasons for absence. This has led to a significant drop in unauthorised absence. Next steps are to act on absence feedback to make adjustments to the Nisai delivery to implement changes within their control, such as the timings of lessons, additional interventions and level of challenge, ensuring that more students are able to make progress with their learning and meet their potential.

On a weekly basis, they are then analysing trends, consulting their EHCP and Student Services teams to apply a focus to the attendance patterns and reasons for absence.

Nisai is also working with their Personal Learning Support Team to ensure communications are in place and identifying reasons for absence and making appropriate changes to timetables. They are using more graphical reports internally and are splitting down cohorts to assess the information in order to break it down further. The focus is for the unauthorised figures to be as accurate and low as they can be.

The Nisai Customer Portal and Nisai Parent Portal

I met with the development team who are currently modelling and testing the front-end displays. The innovative portal will provide not only data but give customers and



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parents access to the wider Nisai offer meaning this project has taken longer than anticipated. This is a huge undertaking, but the full re-design and deployment will be done by Easter 2024.

Data led Analysis and NPDI – Nisai Professional Development

Nisai is now working with Staffordshire University on a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) bid where they would have a dedicated member of staff recruited to carry out research and focus on this area for Nisai and for the University. They recognise the bigger impact of this data and its requirements so want to ensure that they give the necessary focus and attention to it to gain the maximum impact for Nisai, its students and customers.

The company is currently in the development phase of building and launching an Adult Professional Development System for the creation and delivery of unit-based activities with assessments online.

Attendance Tracking and Monitoring

When a teacher is delivering learning, a register is taken twice. At the 10-minute point and then at the end (where engagement and communication are recorded). The 10-minute register notifies the 'customer' via email instantly. This 10-minute mark is a cut off for joining the lesson in order to reduce potential disruption to the session and also lost learning. Instead, the student would be signposted to the recording of the lesson available instantly at the end of delivery. Access to the recordings can be checked by their 'form tutor' and subject teacher.

There has been expansion of the teaching and delivery team over the past year. Typically, a teacher delivers 5-7 lessons per day. There is short term core delivery (up to 10 weeks; increased from 6 due to local need.) These sessions are stand alone and skills based rather than linked to a specific 'standard' scheme leading to GCSE examinations.

For example, a 'standard' GCSE maths course is delivered over four 30-minute sessions per week. The flexibility of the system means that even if a learner is only able to access 2 sessions live, they can watch the recorded sessions in order to access the full course. All the lesson resources (including PowerPoints) are available on their bespoke NVA learning system.

The systems have been improved over time, this is supported by a comprehensive development and support team. There is a minimum 'spec' recommended for access and interaction with lessons. This is discussed with 'customers' prior to engagement. The system is so sophisticated that the teacher is informed if a student is accessing using a tablet or phone as they may not have access to the full content. The teachers are then able to make reasonable adjustments.

The teachers communicate verbally and students can respond both verbally or non-verbally. Students must log in using credentials so there is a level of security. The teachers build rapport and relationships with students during their course of learning.



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If students 'go quiet' then the teachers are very skilled at 'checking in' to make sure engagement is still there and there are no issues.

SEND Improvements

The teacher registers are now colour coded to highlight reasons for absence and improve the accuracy of attendance monitoring. There has also been a new visual aid identifying known barriers to learning, such as Medically ill, mental health, EHCP (with linked 1 page profile), etc. The 1-page profile can be instantly loaded from the register. This is particularly useful for new students joining lessons for the first time where the teacher may be unfamiliar with their needs.

Lessons run from 9 am and finish at 3:20 pm. Access however to recorded lessons can take place at any time. The Head of Teaching and Learning oversees CPD and support across all 3 Nisai Centres (UK, Bangladesh and Brunei currently). There are also joint CPD sessions and training for staff. Feedback has been good from teachers as the training needs are dependent on the staff.

A strong supporting CAST

I met the Customer and Student Support Team and discussed the new form tutor structure. A CAST member makes initial contact with the parent/carer on initial referral to start collecting information on the learners' needs more proactively. Reports are run to monitor non-attenders and recording reasons for absence. The majority of students that attend are not single registered. Unauthorised absence is a priority by asking the questions for absence, there may be some patterns surrounding the reasons including lesson timings, difficulty of content or additional intervention needed.

There is a section on the referral form completed prior to referral regarding the students' availability times. This proactive work over the last 12 months has seen a year on year improvement on non-authorised attendance.

Some students that are unable to access live learning, participate with lessons later in the day via the recordings but currently this is not able to be monitored. This is an area of development. Student completed assessments are however compared with their marks to gauge engagement with the learning.

PLSP is the mentoring programme. They hold a caseload of up to 3 students and they have also been involved in a face-to-face attendance improvement programme. Online and offline attendance is also now recorded, allowing for differentiation of contact. The plans and outcomes are then updated weekly with the student.

Virtual Mentoring started to be offered during the pandemic but has now been extended for non-PSP students who need additional support in addition to their academic programme. Skills include confidence building, organisation, personalised for the areas of support needed. The cohort comes from EHCP reviews. Minimum of 10 sessions for any students referred. This is now also offered as part of EHCP consultations and reviews. This is another example of sound inclusive practice being continually reviewed and developed to meet the needs of the students, staff and community of customers.



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I spoke with the PLSP Director who explained that their network of face-to-face mentors (20 in the east, 16 in the west and 8 in the south) has grown over the past 12 months and now supports over 100 learners, meeting their social and emotional needs as well as assisting the students to access the virtual learning offer. We discussed the CPD offer and how the Director cascaded professional development to every mentor via the team of regional directors via weekly team meetings, half termly mentor meetings and even termly parent/student face to face meetings.

Exams pose a very real challenge for Nisai. A physical setting is required and there now exists a network of centres created to enable the Nisai learners to attend as 'private' candidates. The magnitude of organising this provision across the country is one not to be taken lightly and is a testament to the wider professional relationships that the company has brokered in order to support its community.

High Expectations

Despite celebrating over 26 years as one of the most established market leading companies in the delivery of online learning, this is not an organisation content with standing still, continually looking to improve and provide a better experience for its community. I spoke with the CEO, currently expanding the Nisai market base in Asia. He explained how bringing in an experienced CFO had enabled him to focus on the overseas development of the company and ensure that quality of delivery is maintained throughout the world including Bangkok, Hanoi and Malaysia. Nisai is partnering with the British Embassy, like minded organisations and schools to focus on inclusion and equity. Establishing a network of Nisai Learning Hubs, extracurricular face to face activities, social and emotional support and remote learning can be tailored to create a unique bespoke full holistic service that meets the local context of each learner.

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Nisai as part of their Centre of Excellence review. It continues to be a highly inclusive school with dedicated staff who truly care for the students. It is clear from the review process that the leaders continue to prioritise inclusion. Their work towards the IQM targets over the past 12 months has had significant, positive impact. Therefore, I recommend that they retain Centre of Excellence status and are reviewed again next year. 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.

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Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd