



## Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



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

**Head/Principal** Dhruv Patel

**IQM Lead** Ms Victoria Reaney

**Date of Review** 23rd March 2026

**Assessor** Mrs Louise Stogdale

### **IQM Cluster Programme**

**Cluster Group** Inclusibles

**Ambassador** Ms Annette Sowden

**Next Meeting** To be confirmed

**Meeting Focus** To be confirmed

### **Cluster Attendance**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Spring 2025</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> March 2026	No – Due to illness
<b>Summer 2025</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2025	Attended conference
<b>Autumn 2025</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> September 2025	No- session cancelled
<b>Spring 2026</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> March 2026	No- review day
<b>Summer 2026</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2026	-

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

The leadership team discussed the awareness of the impact of attending cluster meetings on a regular basis, however, due to outside factors the team only managed to attend the IQM conference this year. Communication will be established with the IQM ambassador and the IQM lead at Nisai, to diarise the sessions for regular attendance moving forward. The team were keen to share best practice this year at a cluster group, but unfortunately this was cancelled. They are open to this being rescheduled.



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### **Evidence**

The IQM Lead submitted a detailed Centre of Excellence evaluation and action plan, along with a thorough timetable, enabling the assessor the opportunity to review a broad range of evidence linked to the IQM action plan and the ongoing development of the eight IQM elements.

The assessor evaluated the school's commitment to inclusion and successful completion of the previous year's targets through a wide range of evidence, including:

- IQM Centre of Excellence Review and Action Plan
- School Website
- Nisai Learning Prospectus
- Observations of live lessons
- NISIMS- teacher online system and scheme of works
- Nisai live
- Nisai virtual academy (student portal)
- Personal wellbeing plans (PWP) alongside Personal development plans (PDP)

Alongside discussions with the following:

- CEO and founder and Deputy CEO
- Chief operating officer
- Customer and Student Support Team (CASST)
- Head of mentoring
- Head of teaching and learning
- Teaching Lead
- Subject leaders



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### Evaluation of Targets for last 12 Months

**Target 1: To increase attendance rates and to focus on decreasing unauthorised absences and to work collaboratively with customers on overall participation in lessons.**

Nisai Group recognises the importance of good attendance. Nisai's main aim is to rebuild the confidence of learners; many of whom have struggled in traditional schooling previously in some way. Promoting attendance is central to the provision's ethos and ensuring that all lessons are accessible is of most importance. Lessons are designed to be supportive, manageable and flexible to support the building of self-esteem, confidence alongside academic ability.

The provision has realigned staff in the Customer and Student support team (CaSST) and allocated a dedicated member of staff to focus primarily on attendance. This has ensured that the profile of attendance is high which is allowing trends over time to be seen, explored and analysed. Staff describe how this has resulted in increased progress for learners- sometimes not always academic advances, but often smaller, more individual successes. Engagement in lessons truly matters at Nisai with engagement, contribution and attendance recorded, in every session. This information is shared with both the Customer and Student support and Teaching and Learning team.

Greater communication between all stakeholders has resulted in a more informed, consistent and aligned approach. Staff report that the increased communication has resulted in a substantial increase in absences now being authorised, with reasons for absence now known. Although nonattendance alerts are sent early into every lesson to all identified stakeholders, customers were not previously detailing the reasons for absences. Staff now have a greater awareness of reasons, so can offer more personalised support, follow up missed lessons and encourage the learner to access the recording. This also supports the staff to address any barriers to learning and ensure, through a bespoke approach, can sensitively offer any necessary support or challenge.

All lessons are recorded at Nisai, and this supports not just missed lessons but the opportunity to revise, recap or support a specific concept. As learners have bespoke offers, some access recordings only and attendance previously was only recorded if they were present in the live lesson. Breaking attendance into subcategories e.g. students receiving mentoring or recordings, has allowed a more focused overview, with 'live data at the fingertips for all'. Working alongside a data analyst at a National University has provided independent verification and the data shown on the day shows a positive picture. One example was that 'more students are attending more often now' with authorised absences going from 29% in 2017 to 10% in the academic year 2025/26 with another example being that 'mentoring students are much more likely to access assignments (12%) than last year'.

Nisai's aim of ensuring each learner maximises their academic abilities alongside celebrating learners' wider achievements ensures that the holistic needs of all learners are considered. Highly positive relationships with learners, parents and carers have ensured greater clarity on reasons for absence, so barriers can be reduced, bespoke support offered and a greater holistic awareness of the learner developed.



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It was clear, throughout the review day, that this target has been met and that leaders will continue to review and refine the approach on attendance over the next academic year as it is clear it is having a positive impact. This will be done by continuing to promote the importance of attendance through termly videos and involve the whole community.

**Next Steps:** Continue to prioritise the communication with parents and customers and support students with attending.

**Target 2: To ensure the correct exam entries are made for every student with an exam centre and that all special considerations, access arrangements are in place as needed.**

The Exams and Progression lead talked passionately about the work in this area this academic year. Due to the spread of learners across the country, and the involvement of many local authorities and different ways of working, the team felt the need to focus on efficiency. Following a thorough review, the provision has a comprehensive and structured approach to exam entries, with a clear expectation and awareness of exam requirements. By providing easy to follow visuals for both internal and external use, this has ensured that all parties are aware of their part in the process. Due to the wide coverage of the provision, extensive connections have been made with private exam centres which has ensured that the needs of all students are met.

Leaders are keen to ensure ease for learners and their families and work hard to ensure that they take away the 'strains and pressures' of finding exam centres and ensuring correct entries are made. Course lists and course detail documents were all reviewed to make exam requirements and information clearer. Leaders discussed keeping abreast of national changes to make the process as smooth and efficient however, are aware that there is scope for even more efficiencies. Liaising closely with the SENDCo, learners needing access arrangements and special consideration is documented and 'becomes part of their normal way of working'. This supports access arrangement plans were in line with JCQ regulations and evidence requirements.

By reviewing the curriculum to include courses that are part of the remote invigilation service will ensure a greater number of courses are accessible for more. Again, through maintaining clear communication with all staff, learners, customers and parents regarding exam entries and support arrangements has ensured correct entries are made and ensured 'everything is done, which should allow ease for learners and their families'. The team discussed the importance of 'giving young people the opportunity and sometimes a fresh slate'. This 'no pre-judgement' approach ensures all feel comfortable in the 'often complicated system.' Staff are proud of their progress with this target and aim to make the process as streamlined, accessible and preventative before exam day.

**Next Step:** Continue to refine communication to ensure it encourages effective action to be taken by the customer, pivoting more towards remote assessment to alleviate private centre pressures and provide further training for exam teams and teachers to reflect the new remote-focused processes



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### **Target 3: To review and increase the quality of the delivery of lessons and resources ensuring the highest standard of education.**

The Head of Teaching and Learning and subject leads discussed the significant work that has been completed this academic year in this area. Regular quality checks are completed of lessons, using the Teaching Standards as a framework alongside standardisation. The platform used, NISAIMS, creates consistency and ensures teachers are equipped with full information about the learner including gender identity, preferred name and any barriers to learning.

For the learners, confidence measures are recorded at the start and end of the session. Learners are given the opportunity to choose their assignment with a 'RAG approach in place'. Leaders wanted students to feel in control of their own learning and have seen engagement increase with this approach. The learners are given full flexibility with whatever working for them being accepted. For example, breaks are allowed in sessions where a breakout room is provided and used as a private space to offer any necessary support in private. Learners are encouraged to unmute and answer questions; however, public chats are used for responding to a question also. Many prefer to use a private chat space instead. Options are given and teachers are led with whatever makes the learner feel most comfortable. Learners are given choices of how to present work, and they can share their emotions using emojis. A one-page profile is used as a living document and grows with the individual. This is overseen by the SEN team and includes both pastoral and academic information. Teachers explained how this document is the 'crux' to supporting learners as it always includes the likes and dislikes of a learner and supports in overcoming any barriers to learning. Teachers confidently adapt lessons to meet learners' needs effectively. Everything you would see in a 'physical school is replicated at Nisai'.

Sessions are intentionally short to encourage greater concentration and to support the learners' attention span. Typically, lessons are a half hour long, with A level lessons being an hour. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use high quality resources to deliver thoughtfully planned lessons. Schemes of work include core principles but also include British Values, creativity, sustainable development goals and Prevent awareness. Teachers ensure learners understand what they are learning through their considered approaches.

All feedback is individualised, with all resources online, and with no textbooks being used. This is so learners can listen and absorb without the worry of capturing the lesson. All platforms work on a mobile device; however, many do connect through a computer.

Recordings of all lessons support learners, with an example of a learner with a sleep impairment, accessing the recording later. Post learning challenges are set for learners, rather than homework; this is to ensure learning remains positive rather than any possible negative connotations that could be related to this term being used. Pre-learning assessments are completed to identify where learning gaps are and to plan accordingly.



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Leaders are aware that this is an ongoing target and that with processes and the curriculum evolving, approaches will be adapted and altered to meet the needs of the learners and to improve the quality of delivery. Significant work has gone into this target across this last year with reviewed procedures and processes understood and followed by all. All staff are encouraged to offer suggestions and ideas to the Development Team, with all ideas considered. This ensures that the staff who 'are on the ground and understand the learners most', can contribute positively to ensuring the highest standard of education.

**Next Step:** Further develop and investigate the quality of delivery.

### **Target 4: Redesign and develop a robust CIAG programme, considering the needs and aspirations of students.**

The curriculum at Nisai covers KS2 through to KS5 and a range of subjects are offered. Alongside this, focus is given to preparing them for reintegration or supporting them with their chosen pathway, whether this is college, university, apprenticeships or employment. Schemes of work offer a broad and balanced curriculum, deepening subject knowledge but also focussing on strengthening other essential skills. Accredited courses are offered that are called 'Build Skills for Life'.

Learners are supported through a student portal, with all being allocated tutors. Within the portal successes are celebrated with students of the week being displayed and house points being awarded. The 'My Course Page' can be personalised and this is where learners can locate all resources. The portal is easy to navigate, and pages look similar across the platform, supporting accessibility. All new learners receive an induction prior to starting so that they feel comfortable and confident. Learners have autonomy of how the page looks and how they would like to view the information e.g. display information as a day, week or month. Self-help videos are available also (e.g. how to access recordings) which supports the learner without having to rely on teacher support. These approaches help develop independence and resilience which are skills needed throughout life.

Key events are added to the platform e.g. Ramadan which supports the holistic development of the learner and their 'appreciation of the world that they live'. Within the Student Portal there is 'The Wellbeing Centre'. Within here students will find important information on 'my health, my future, my safety and my community'. This area is regularly updated by the customer, student support team. This team 'ensures students feel heard' and offers 1:1 sessions for wellbeing if an issue is raised. This support is not just for the student, but parents/ carers also, with regular phone calls and emails sent from tutors or mentors to ensure rapport is built.

With regards to students with EHCPs the team are very keen to ensure there is 'action behind words'. Often parents and carers are frustrated with the system, so it is important to the team that 'if they make promises, they deliver.' Nisai is named on over two hundred and five EHCPs, so communication is key especially considering work spans across 80-90 local authorities.



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The one-page summary profile that is created is specially tailored to the individual and matches what the student can do, alongside what is in section B of the EHCP. All stakeholders are involved in the reviews, with Nisai hosting many with the same process in place for both pre and post 16.

There is also a social space for learners. Due to all learners being educated remotely, this space is very important to develop socialisation skills and build relationships. With multiple options available, including a general hangout, a book club, a debate hub and a creativity hub, the portal allows for engagement between learners and to develop communication skills. Students are invited to be part of Nisia's development with student voice collected termly alongside a student magazine.

Alongside this mentoring is offered to all either face to face or remotely and offers pastoral and academic support, which always starts with the likes and dislikes of the learner. Leaders believe that this approach supports students to navigate challenges at school and in life now and in later life. Although not directly linked to developing a CIAG programme, this offer supports learners with the next stage in their life and through the bespoke offer, focuses on what will make a difference to that individual.

Through phone calls or emails relationships are built and as with all other approaches at Nisai, the mentoring is based on what the learner can cope with and what the young person needs e.g. learning independent skills. With twenty-seven mentors across the country, support is given to the whole family and not just the individual. For students with EHCPs, mentors work alongside teaching staff to complement academic lessons with practical life skills and employability.

Leaders have introduced a programme to all students called Unifrog. The platform helps students explore the world of work and education, guides the learners to make the best choices about their next steps in life and supports them to make the strongest applications to colleges, universities or jobs. This combined with 1:1 sessions supports learners with their next steps and leaders are very positive about the growth of this moving forward. They plan to constantly review and adapt the approach in response to learners' needs and feedback.

**Next Step:** Continue to support students



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### Agreed Targets for next 12 Months

**Target 1: To have increased knowledge and continued awareness of student barriers.**

#### Comments

The continuous professional development cycle will be reviewed and implemented in advance of next academic year. This will ensure sessions planned include barriers to learning that students at Nisai experience most often. The knowledge of these barriers is often found on the pupil information and referral forms. These will be reviewed to ensure that any potential barrier is explored resulting in staff having a greater awareness and identified, specific training. This will ensure that all staff are better placed to support the students.

Staff currently have access to the one-page profiles for individuals, however the team plan to review the student systems to ensure all staff have access to student backgrounds and profile knowledge.

To allow the training to be completed and bespoke support offered, it is essential that these barriers are communicated to staff so records will be checked to ensure the information held is still accurate and no new barriers have arisen. It is important that the Development, Customer and Student Support and Teaching and Learning team, alongside the data analyst, are involved in this target to ensure effective communication and effective holistic developments around student barriers.

**Target 2: Review curriculum and accreditation pathways to increase accessibility through remote invigilation.**

#### Comments

The team plans to complete a full curriculum review to determine which courses are more accessible with regards to remote invigilation. The team aims to offer more accessible courses to take the barrier away of exam centres and associated entry requirements. The aim is to allow and plan for secure remote invigilation, flexible assessment models whilst maintaining academic rigour. By reviewing the current offer and evaluating the impact of current exam centre requirements on student anxiety, attendance and withdrawal from exams choices the curriculum can be redesigned and new courses introduced. Once the review is completed course lists, details and specification including schemes of work will be updated accordingly.



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### **Target 3: To focus on the personal development of students.**

#### **Comments**

For this target the team plans to engage with the students more regularly through student surveys. By seeking the voice of the student and involving parents/ carers into more discussions at the start and throughout the journey of their learner, developments to the personal development of the student can become integral to their education. Personal development is something that is currently already considered at Nisai, but the team is keen to be as responsive as possible, and by creating a framework and cycle for this will ensure the holistic needs of the learner are central to any changes. The cycle of 'plan, do, review' ensures that the provision stays current and constantly focussed on the student and their needs.

### **Target 4: To ensure consistent high-quality adaptive teaching across all lessons to meet the needs of all students.**

#### **Comments**

The teaching and learning team aim to focus on developing a clear adaptive teaching framework including: Differentiated task pathways in live lessons/lesson recordings, accessible classroom notes in a format that can be adapted by the student to support student barriers for example visual barriers/dyslexia etc., and scaffold resources available in advance to provide CPD on scaffolding without over-supporting. This approach will explore the philosophy that every student learns at different rates and in different ways, so teaching needs to be responsive rather than a 'one size fits all approach.' By meeting the needs of all learners, addressing misconceptions quickly, offering appropriate scaffolding whilst maintaining high standards this will build students confidence and motivation.



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### Overview

Nisai is an inspiring, creative and inclusive provision. This online education provider provides an academic offer for students aged 9 to 25 years old. 85% of students have an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Many students access their learning at home, with some accessing learning online, whilst attending their host school. Regardless of venue, Nisai offers a truly personalised approach to learning, recognising that every learner's journey is different and deserving of tailored support. The primary aim for all staff is to equip students with the skills they need to be as successful as possible.

Inclusivity matters to all at Nisai, with all able to talk about the uniqueness of the provision but equally, you can physically see inclusive approaches in action when you visit. Each programme is bespoke to the learner and is focussed on learner progression. This is not always measured in academic scores, but sometimes through smaller, holistic steps e.g. progressing from a private chat, to a public one and then having the confidence to respond in the chat and have a voice.

Every learner arrives with a unique story, and the role of all staff is to listen, understand and build a programme that works. High quality, live online teaching offers consistency for the learners alongside a secure, structured environment. Alongside the online teaching, in person and virtual mentoring is offered. This mentoring is crucial to develop resilience and confidence with a parent at a recent EHCP review stating, 'What a difference Nisai has made to our daughter.'

Nisai UK's reach is international, accommodating many backgrounds and cultures. Lessons are ability based on initial assessments and not led by age. Nisai is led by the learner with some attending one lesson and some attending many more.

They are a reflective team that ensures all staff are included and valued. Leaders at every level have an unwavering commitment to serving the community and focus on the importance of 'belonging'. Minimising barriers to learning is central to the philosophy of this supportive, aspirational online education provider. Staff have learners at the centre of all they do with 'someone always being available on the phone to support.'

The CEO and founder and the Chief Operating Officer talk about the 'Nisai way' and how regardless of barriers, the same high-quality offer will be delivered regardless. Consistency is key. The CEO is acutely aware that although using assisted technologies, there still needs to be a 'human side' to support learners to 'get to their destination'. The CEO, alongside his team, shows a commitment to engaging learners before taking them on their journey. He explained his passion to ensure proficiency in English is correct.

The CEO explained his vision but explained how it is only possible with 'the right people behind you'. He believes Nisai's supportive, nurturing culture is possible because of the 'home grown team' and he 'feels fortunate and privileged to have a team' like he does.

Securing and building relationships is key at Nisai and this could be heard and felt when describing a learner by much of the team. The staff explained that this learner is 'part of the furniture.' A learner who is 25 years old, with complex needs, joined Nisai not for



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academic success but joined for the 'love of learning'. Staff are now creating bespoke courses to satisfy him as now he 'has a thirst for qualifications'. Although most staff have supported this learner virtually, they are 'advocates for his future' and discuss how his legacy will live on in Nisai, when he comes to an end of his learning this year. This 'intelligent, funny' learner has attended Nisai for nine years. This learner's story encapsulates the visions and values of Nisai. Staff feel they are 'here for a reason people's futures.'

The educational approach is student centred and adapts to the diverse needs of its learners. Nisai creates inclusive learning environments where learners who may struggle in traditional settings can thrive with confidence. What makes Nisai unique is being able to reach learners anywhere in the world and its commitment to both academic success and emotional wellbeing. Its uniqueness lies in its dedication to re-engage learners and reignite a love of learning. This is a provision that has high aspirations and expectations for all. There are clear procedures in place that promote collaboration, communication and enthusiasm. Teachers and leaders are knowledgeable and skilled and make appropriate adaptations to meet students' needs. Regardless of being on the SEND pathway or not, all learners are fully integrated into the life of the provision with adults knowing the pupils and their needs extremely well.

Leaders are forward-thinking and outward facing. Staff 'love what they are doing' and are fully committed to the journey of all learners. New ideas and strategies are rooted in evidence and always focussed on reducing barriers to learning. The inclusive ethos and focus on achievement, expectations and aspirations have given rise to many success stories at Nisai. Success is celebrated at every opportunity with examples of this seen on platforms throughout the assessment and through discussions with staff. 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 they have the passion and capacity to continue to drive the inclusion agenda in their provision and beyond.