



Assessor's Evaluation for the IQM CoE Award



School Name The Willows School Academy Trust
Stipularis Drive
Hayes
Middlesex
UB4 9QB

Head/Principal Mr Malcolm Shaw

IQM Lead Ms Danai Vourdanou

Date of Review 22nd October 2025

Assessor Ms Pam Ash

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group Quality First Network

Ambassador Ms Debbie Shirley

Next Meeting 3rd February 2026 – Three Rivers Primary School

Meeting Focus TBC

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2023	8 th November 2023	No
Spring 2024	28 th February 2024	Yes
Summer 2024	22 nd May 2024	Yes
Autumn 2024	5 th November 2024	No
Spring 2025	4 th March 2025	Yes
Summer 2025	30 th June 2025	No
Autumn 2025	7 th October 2025	Yes



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Evidence

- Learning walk
- Meeting with Parents
- Meeting with Teachers
- Meeting with Tas
- Meeting with pupils
- Meeting with Family Liaison Officer
- Meetings with IQM Lead
- IQM Action Plan paperwork
- School website
- Ofsted Report October 2024

Evaluation of Targets for last 12 Months

Target 1: Ensure a high quality and supportive programme for parental engagement to ensure that pupils witness an evolving positive relationship between their household and their school

A Parental Needs Assessment provided critical insight into the interest and concerns of the parents. This was then used to shape planning and deliver relevant support. Targeted workshops were planned and delivered using both internal and external staff. The aim was to empower parents with practical strategies whilst also strengthening their relationship with the school. In addition, the frequency of quality parent - teacher interactions were formalised and enhanced. The year begins with a 'Meet the Teacher' session and that sets clear expectations, routines and then followed by termly parents' evenings. Fortnightly coffee mornings were also introduced which allowed for informal chats as well as themed sessions like, read with your child, sensory play ideas and supporting positive behaviour at home. These morning sessions helped the families to feel more at ease within the school environment. Parents spoke positively about this. The school link book still exists, and this allows for regular contact alongside weekly phone calls. Finally, the school improved its communication system by moving from Showbie to Sonar, this allowing them to reach more families.

Next Steps:

- Launch a termly report on Sonar summarising parental feedback and actions taken
- Explore community-based events or workshops co-led by parents to increase inclusion for working families
- Design and deliver a new series of workshops focused on managing SEMH at home – involve parents in shaping content to ensure it reflects lived experience and need

Target 2: Improve the overall attendance and reduce persistent absence so that both are better than the national average

Recognising that all pupils have an EHCP, it was appropriate that the school approached this balancing a combination of robust tracking, early intervention, family support, and positive intervention. The previous year's data was analysed in order to identify patterns, trends and specific pupils and groups at risk of persistent absence. The Attendance Policy was updated to ensure that it contained best practice around early intervention and reintegration. This was shared with staff and communicated to parents via newsletters and coffee mornings. A tiered support system is used to address barriers to attendance, including early parent meetings, bespoke support plans, and access to internal and external support. Tailored reintegration plans are now in place for those pupils returning from extended absence. Collaboration with families was key in implementing this and continues to be so. Celebrating good attendance and improved attendance takes place in weekly assemblies and class newsletters.

Next Step:

- Introduce attendance case studies for pupils below 90%, tracking actions and impact more systematically
- Continue with half-termly attendance meetings with SLT and Pastoral Staff
- Include attendance discussions in all parent-teacher meetings and coffee mornings and daily in link book
- Share anonymised case studies with parents showing successful attendance improvement
- Involve pupils in designing attendance posters
- Compare attendance trends term on term and against national SEND benchmarks

Target 3: Ensure that each subject area has a high-quality curriculum map and schemes of work for each year group to secure good or better progress from Year 1 – Year 6

A review of the curriculum maps and schemes of learning helped to identify strengths as well as areas, where coverage, sequencing or clarity could be improved. A whole school curriculum framework was devised, drawing on national expectations and examples of best practice, to include the key components for each subject. Collaboration was important, with subject leads working closely with staff to create a shared understanding of curriculum intent and allowed best practice and inclusive strategies to be shared across the team. New curriculum maps and schemes of work were created and is now more reflective of the learners' needs with an emphasis on real- world application, practical learning and overlearning strategies that support memory and retention. Teachers are now clearer about the learning journey across year groups, and this is having a positive impact on lesson planning and pupil progress tracking.

Next Step:

- Schedule annual reviews of curriculum maps and schemes to ensure content remains current, relevant, and well sequenced
- Continue to offer planning time and targeted CPD to support staff confidence with the new framework and progression model
- Embed assessment opportunities more formally into each scheme of work to ensure ongoing tracking of small step progress
- Develop curriculum overviews in a simplified, parent friendly format to share on the school website and at review meetings
- Encourage further collaboration between subject leads and external SEND specialists to refine content and pedagogy



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Target 4: Ensure that the focus is on routine and ritual and ready for learning behaviours

Given the nature of the pupils and their needs, it is important that consistency is there in routines and rituals to help pupils feel safe, regulated, and ready to learn.

First, the school established what routine, ritual and ready for learning should look like. A set of whole school behaviour expectations was co-produced by staff and shared with pupils. These were consistently communicated across classrooms, through assemblies, visuals and during daily morning routines. To ensure consistency in delivery, staff CPD sessions were held covering classroom management techniques, behaviour regulation, the use of visuals and communication tools and trauma informed practice. Morning routines established in all classes using visual timetables etc. In addition, rituals added during transitions, before lunch, at the end of the day and in assemblies. These have helped pupils to feel safe. Pupils are praised for demonstrating independence, emotional readiness, and positive attitudes. The start of the day is now calmer, transitions are more settled and there is improvement in pupil engagement in lessons

Next Step:

- Gather pupil feedback on which routines, rituals help them to feel most ready to learn; adapt practices accordingly
- Share best practice between Key Stages to ensure continuity of routines from class to class and year to year
- Share examples of routines with parents via newsletters or home packs so that they can be reinforced at home
- Provide refresher CPD sessions mid-year to review strategies and share successful approaches

Agreed Targets for next 12 Months

Target 1: To embed IT across the curriculum in a way that enhances engagement and independence for all learners, through clear, strategic planning, audits, staff training, and inclusive classroom practices

- Conduct an audit of hardware, software, and digital platforms across the school
- Map how current IT is used to support learning, access, and independence for pupils with diverse needs
- Identify gaps in provision
- Create a whole school IT and Assistive Technology strategy, including clear guidance on the inclusive use of devices
- Identify key IT tools that align with EHCP outcomes
- Ensure IT links to the curriculum access and supports all four areas of SEND
- Build staff confidence and capacity
- Strengthen digital inclusion at home
- Monitor and evaluate

Comments

As shown previously, the school analyses what is currently present and how this is used before launching into new work. Again, the plan shows how pupils and parents will be at the centre of planning.

Target 2: To ensure that the newly developed school cabins/chalets are fully embedded into school life as inclusive accessible spaces for intervention

- Create a timetabled needs-led use of Chalet spaces – based on pupil need, intervention priority, and EHCP provision
- Allocate space for consistent sessions
- Promote the new spaces as part of inclusive provision – to parents and train midday staff and TAs on how the cabins contribute to the wider inclusive ethos
- Make the environments inclusive and therapeutic
- Strengthen collaboration with external professionals
- Monitor impact of intervention in the new spaces

Comments

These are excellent additional areas, and it is so right to ensure that they are going to be timetabled. The resources need to be used in the best possible way and relating this to pupil need and intervention will ensure that this happens. It is positive to see the aim to develop links with external professionals.

Target 3: To embed Evergreen as a safe, structured, and restorative behaviour support space that is fully integrated into the school's inclusive behaviour approach – providing consistent support for pupils needing regulation and reflection, and reducing escalation across the school

- Develop a clear action plan for Evergreen
- Define the purpose, structure, and expectations of the Evergreen space, including entry and exit processes
- Deploy Behaviour Support Staff strategically – monitor low-level disruption and intervene early
- Embed Restorative practice and Reflective practices in Evergreen

Comments

The school has considered the above points and is clear about the steps that are needed. This is a positive development for the school and should support the school's inclusive ethos.

Target 4: To ensure that all community visits and cultural opportunities are purposeful, inclusive, and embedded within curriculum planning, EHCP outcomes, enabling all pupils to meaningfully access and benefit from enriching real-world experiences that support both personal development and academic progress

- Audit and map cultural capital opportunities across the curriculum
- Create a whole school map that links experiences to curriculum areas, pupil interests, and life skills
- Strengthen planning of trips to reflect intent, impact and inclusivity

Comments

Once again, the school is aiming to strengthen whole schoolwork for the pupils to benefit. This is another example of how the pupils' needs are at the heart of the school's work.



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

The IQM lead is committed to working with the group. Her illness and no staff available for cover have been the reasons why she was unable to attend meetings. She did though comment on the distance between the schools and the long travelling time taken which is not helpful.

She said that visiting other schools is always a beneficial experience, as it is good to see how other schools are working and usually there are good ideas that can be adapted.

From St Vincent's Catholic Primary ideas from there were;

- Practical strategies to help teachers and support staff better recognise SEMH needs in pupils
- Ideas for strengthening SEMH support into daily practice
- Networking – building links with other schools
- Action planning – concrete next steps for developing a staff CPD

She noted the following points from Essex Primary School:

- Practical ideas for structuring personalised learning groups to meet a wider range of SEND needs
- Strategies to tailor tasks, resources, and support more effectively in small group settings
- Increased confidence for teachers and support staff in running groups that balance challenge, support and independence
- Opportunities to share and adopt best practice from other schools with similar SEND profiles
- Stronger whole school understanding of how personalised groups contribute to equity and access for SEND learners



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Overview

The Willows School Academy Trust is a standalone Trust in Hayes in the London Borough of Hillingdon. It is a small educational needs school for children who are in receipt of an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP), with the main needs being identified as social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The school's pupils come from 8 local authorities. Following an outstanding outcome from the Ofsted Inspection in October 2024, Hillingdon Borough asked the school to increase its numbers. This led to the school being creative in the ways in which the learning spaces have been increased. It is to the credit of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) that all changes were made with the needs of the pupils being taken into consideration.

My base for the day was the new cabin that has been built on the playground. This is a large space and half of it has been given over to play therapy. To make the best use of the space, a wall and door have been ordered so that the other part of the room can be used at the same time. A concrete base has been laid in preparation for the second cabin. This one will be used for a more sensory approach and more outside learning. This is needed because of a change in pupil need. The school now has some non-verbal pupils, and this more sensory approach will be of benefit to them.

The school has a warm, welcoming environment and throughout my time there, I saw interactions demonstrating how supportive and understanding the staff are of individual pupil need. Care has been given to how the additional pupils have been added to the classrooms. Most classes have mixed year groups apart from Year 6 and some Key Stage 1 pupils. All classrooms have reflection areas where the pupils can choose to go to self-regulate and time out spaces. The latter are directed by the teachers. The areas in the Year 6 rooms are much plainer and more functional to help prepare them for the transition to secondary school. All classrooms display the individual pupil targets so that pupils can be reminded of them as when necessary. There are also the points display. The pupils can earn points during the different sessions of the day, and these are awarded for positive learning behaviour, like good listening and sitting. The pupils can then use these points in the school shop to 'buy' items. They are displayed on shelves with the highest point items being at the top. The idea is to encourage the pupils to 'save.' The range of items on display are certainly what pupils would want and so this is a real incentive to encourage good learning behaviour.

The increase in the pupil numbers meant that SLT had to think about how to manage transport. Previous pupils stayed in the Hall for a singing assembly as they waited for their transport to arrive. This was made busier by the increased numbers as was the parking in the playground for the minibuses and cars. A 'walking bus' was created. There is a path from the school to the road where the transport parks. Staff stand alongside the path as the pupils walk to their bus. The use of walkie-talkies allows the staff outside to alert when transport is there. The pupils then walk to their bus, gaining independence but still have the security of staff along the pathway. I observed this at the end of the day and was impressed by how calm the pupils were as they walked to their transport. I was told that much work had gone into this, but it is clearly a ritual that takes place at the start and end of each day and is well established.



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Parents speak so positively about the school. Many have negative experiences from other schools, and one parent told me that she sat in the car outside of school after her son had started, waiting for the call to take him home. A real strength of the school is that displaying poor behaviour does not lead to being sent home. Rather the staff support individually to help the pupil self-regulate and remain in school. I heard how some parents have been able to work for the first time and for others it is so important to have the security of knowing they can get on with their day without calls from the school.

Coffee mornings are held every two weeks which allows them time to talk to each other as well as learning more from staff and external professionals. Parents are encouraged to come into school and see the school working and see reading and maths, for example. Parents like how the start of the day is staggered and so there is no feeling of rush to get children there on time. Staff are very supportive and keep in touch with parents. Parents relax because they know their children are safe and cared for. They know that the children trust the staff.

There is an active PTA that supports the school, and all parents are invited to take part. The PTA follows the school's inclusive lead. There is an Easter and Christmas Fair as well as Sports Day and Information Days. I heard about the art exhibition in the Hall where all parents are welcome to see the children's work. They can purchase items if they wish.

Governors are fully involved in the life of the school and embrace the school's inclusive focus. They have regular meetings and are updated about what is happening. They are invited into school and can see at first hand how things are managed and dealt with.

Teachers and support staff speak positively about the school. SLT has given them the freedom to do all that is required for the pupils. The pupils are clear about boundaries, and the staff welcome the way in which they can use incentives, like going to the local park or to Tesco to buy ingredients for cooking. They are reflective and creative in the way they approach learning, knowing that the pupils all learn differently. Learning is adapted to meet different needs, and inclusion is at the fore of their work. They are a tight team who respect each other's strengths and are ready to offer support as and when it is needed. Staff are cared for by the wellbeing days, Inset where they work together and the knowledge that SLT are there to support and advise.

The work of the Family Liaison/Attendance Officer is a good example of how staff ensure that they know pupils and families. She meets families 'where they are at.' She too has had to think about adapting the way she works to manage the larger number of pupils. Where coffee mornings would have been enough, now she is thinking about offering online meetings to support those parents who are not able to travel to the school. She is on the gate every morning and so it is easy for parents to speak to her. Support is there for parents to help to improve attendance, and contracts are used when necessary.

It was a delight to speak with the pupils. They feel happy and secure in school. They spoke about the opportunities that are available to them through clubs and Fun Fridays. They were able to list a whole range of place that they visit from Bubble Planet to



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Snakes and Ladders and enjoyed the trips. They spoke about the school shop and how they can buy things with the points they have earned. They told me about the school council and how they can share their ideas.

It was good to visit the school again and to see how it has developed and adapted to meet the differing needs of the pupils. One thing that has not changed is the Headteacher's vision for an inclusive school that all staff shares vision. Individual pupils' matter and thought is given to how their needs can be supported. Staff are positive and committed to creating an environment where all can flourish. Visiting the school was an uplifting experience for me.

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: Ms Pam Ash

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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