



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 13th October 2026

Assessor Ms Jemini Lakhman

IQM Cluster Programme

Cluster Group Quality First Network / London 11

Ambassador Ms Debbie Shirley / Mr Dwight Weir

Next Meeting 2nd December 2026

Cluster Attendance

Term	Date	Attendance
Autumn 2025	7 th Oct 2025	Yes
Spring 2026	3 rd Feb 2026	Yes
Summer 2026	7 th July 2026	No

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

Participation in IQM cluster group meetings has had a positive impact on The Willows School's inclusive practice, providing valuable opportunities for professional collaboration, reflection and the sharing of effective strategies. Meetings have strengthened staff understanding of social, emotional and mental health needs, supported the development of personalised learning groups and reinforced the importance of neuroscience-informed, restorative approaches to behaviour.

An important outcome of the cluster meetings was the introduction of Brick Therapy, which The Willows learned about through professional discussions with other schools. The approach particularly appealed to the school because of its focus on group therapy, providing pupils with opportunities to develop their social skills, communication, collaboration and ability to work together. This demonstrates the practical value of the



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cluster network in sharing approaches that can be adapted to meet pupils' needs and further strengthen inclusive provision.

The Willows also greatly valued the opportunity to host an IQM cluster meeting, welcoming colleagues from other schools to share practice and explore the school's inclusive ethos. The positive feedback received about *The Willows Way* was particularly encouraging and provided an opportunity to showcase the school's pedagogy, inclusive approaches and commitment to supporting pupils' individual needs. Hosting the meeting also enabled the school to contribute to the wider professional network by sharing its experiences and approaches to inclusion.

Learning from other schools has continued to validate and inform The Willows' own practice, particularly the development of the Evergreen model. Discussions around executive functioning, emotional regulation and personalised provision have encouraged ongoing reflection on how support can be refined to improve pupils' engagement, independence and access to learning.

Looking ahead, The Willows is keen to extend the benefits of the cluster network by enabling teaching assistants (TAs) to attend future cluster meetings. This will provide further opportunities for professional development, shared learning and collaboration, helping TAs to develop their knowledge and skills and apply new strategies within their everyday practice.

Overall, the IQM cluster group has supported The Willows in strengthening its inclusive ethos, building staff confidence and developing practice through collaboration with other schools. The school values the network as an opportunity both to learn from others and to share its own expertise, with a continued commitment to contributing to professional dialogue and supporting the development of inclusive practice across the cluster.

Evidence

- Meeting with IQM Coordinator regarding IQM Review and Action Plan
- Meeting with Parent Governor
- Learning drop ins and talking to students
- Meeting with Teachers and Senior Leadership Team
- Meeting with Family Liaison & Attendance Officer
- Meeting with Behaviour Lead
- Discussion with Head of School & Inclusion Lead
- School Website
- IQM Action Plan
- Family Newsletters and Attendance Newsletters
- Exercise Books

Evaluation of Targets for last 12 Months

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

Willows School have successfully embedded information technology across the curriculum to improve access, engagement and independence for all learners. This has been supported by the appointment of an IT and Computing Coordinator, a comprehensive audit of digital provision and the introduction of a more consistent, phase-appropriate approach to technology.

A particularly positive development has been the introduction of Chromebooks, which have enabled pupils to become more independent in their learning. During the review, staff commented that Chromebooks were more effective in meeting pupils' needs than the Apple technology previously used. The devices allow pupils to access learning more readily, carry out their own research and complete tasks with greater independence. Teachers also highlighted how Chromebooks have provided students greater choice in how they present their learning, helping to increase participation and engagement during lessons. This flexibility supports students to demonstrate their understanding in ways that work for them, promoting a more inclusive approach to teaching and learning.

The school has also introduced touch-typing software to help pupils develop their keyboard skills and digital independence. This provides opportunities to build practical skills that can support their learning across subjects and increase their confidence when using technology.

Pupil voice gathered during the learning walk further demonstrated the positive impact of digital learning. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about using Chromebooks to access Numbots and Times Tables Rock Stars. These platforms make mathematics more interactive and enjoyable, helping to develop pupils' enthusiasm for the subject while providing opportunities to practise and strengthen mathematical fluency. Staff have received training to develop their confidence in using technology to enhance teaching, provide differentiated learning opportunities and remove barriers to participation.

The school has also strengthened online safeguarding through improved filtering and monitoring systems and has supported families to access digital learning at home. During coffee mornings e-safety has been a key topic involved including being taught to students on a regular basis.

Next Steps:

- Develop digital independence: Continue to build pupils' confidence in using Chromebooks for independent research, completing learning tasks and presenting their work.
- Further develop touch-typing skills to support functional digital literacy.

Target 2: To ensure the newly developed school cabins/chalets are fully embedded into school life as inclusive, accessible spaces for intervention and therapy—supporting regulated, purposeful and meaningful access to play therapy, SALT, BRP, and FFT interventions for all pupils who need them.

The school has made significant progress towards this target, successfully establishing one of the cabins as a highly effective intervention and therapy space that is now fully embedded within daily school life. The provision offers a calm, nurturing and purposeful environment that supports a wide range of targeted interventions, including Play Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), Better Reading Partnership (BRP) and Fresh Start (FFT). During the review visit, a speech and language session was observed, with one pupil explaining how the sessions had helped him to take turns more effectively in conversation and improve the clarity of his speech. Staff spoke positively about the impact of having a dedicated intervention space away from the busy classroom environment, enabling pupils to engage more successfully in personalised support and therapeutic programmes.

The cabin has strengthened the school's capacity to meet individual needs through timely and carefully targeted interventions. Leaders and staff reported positive outcomes in pupils' communication skills, emotional regulation, confidence and readiness to learn. During the learning walk, one of the cabins was also being used by a Year 6 class, with staff highlighting the value of the additional flexible learning space as pupil numbers continue to increase. This reflects the adaptability of the provision and its contribution to the school's inclusive approach to meeting a diverse range of needs.

The planned development of the second cabin demonstrates the school's continued commitment to enhancing its specialist provision and ensuring support remains responsive to emerging needs. Leaders articulated a clear vision for maximising the use of these spaces to further widen opportunities for pupils, strengthen therapeutic and intervention support, and promote positive outcomes for all learners. This proactive approach reflects the school's determination to continually develop inclusive environments that enable pupils to thrive both academically and personally.

Next Steps:

- School leaders continue to ensure the cabins are fully embedded into school life through clear timetabling, effective communication between therapists and school staff, and regular monitoring of their impact.
- Pupil voice, staff feedback and progress towards individual targets should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and ensure the spaces remain accessible, purposeful and responsive to pupils' needs.

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.

Evergreen is now a well-established and integral part of the school's inclusive behaviour framework, providing a calm, nurturing environment where pupils can access timely support to regulate their emotions, reflect on their actions, and successfully return to learning. Staff across the school demonstrate a clear understanding of the purpose of Evergreen, viewing it not as a consequence-based provision, but as a proactive and restorative intervention that supports pupils' social, emotional, and mental health needs. Teachers and the behaviour team discussed how its consistent implementation has strengthened the school's trauma-informed and relationship-based approach, ensuring that pupils receive the right support at the right time.

The impact of Evergreen has been significant across the school community. The dedicated behaviour team has successfully embedded consistent systems and routines, enabling early intervention before behaviours escalate. Pupils are increasingly developing the language, self-awareness, and strategies needed to recognise and regulate their emotions more independently. Through restorative conversations, sensory supports, and structured reflection, pupils are better able to understand triggers, repair relationships, and re-engage positively with learning. Staff report increased confidence in responding to dysregulation, knowing that a supportive and responsive system is in place that prioritises pupil wellbeing while maintaining high expectations.

Next Steps:

As the school moves into its IQM Flagship journey, leaders will now focus on the systematic monitoring, evaluation, and refinement of the Evergreen model to further strengthen its impact and sustainability. This work will form a central strand of the Flagship Project, *"The Willows Way: A Positive Behaviour Framework for Specialist Settings Supporting Pupils with SEMH as a Primary Need."*

Through robust data analysis, case study development, staff and pupil voice activities, and ongoing review of behaviour outcomes, leaders will evaluate which aspects of the model have the greatest impact on pupil regulation, engagement, and progress. Findings will be used to further develop practice, inform staff training, and next steps for the school.

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

This target has been fully achieved and is a significant strength of the school's provision. Community visits and cultural opportunities are now strategically embedded within curriculum planning and linked closely to EHCP outcomes, ensuring pupils can access meaningful real-world learning experiences. Leaders have developed a rich programme of educational visits and enrichment activities that broaden pupils' experiences, develop cultural capital and enhance personal development.

During the review, pupils and staff spoke enthusiastically about the wide range of opportunities available to them, including curriculum visits, community experiences, residential trips and enrichment activities. These experiences are carefully planned to support both academic learning and wider outcomes, including communication, independence, social interaction, resilience and confidence. Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of how visits are used to reinforce classroom learning whilst helping pupils develop essential life skills.

A particular strength is the inclusive approach taken to ensure that all pupils can access opportunities regardless of need. Careful planning, risk assessments, preparation activities and differentiated support allow pupils to participate successfully and confidently. The impact of these opportunities was particularly evident through discussions around the school's PGL residential experience, which staff and parents described as transformative. Pupils returned with increased confidence, independence, resilience and self-esteem, highlighting the lasting impact of high-quality enrichment experiences.

Friday enrichment clubs further enhance the curriculum offer, providing opportunities for pupils to pursue their interests through activities such as sports, movie clubs, art, gardening, and pupil-led choices. These opportunities contribute significantly to pupils' wellbeing, engagement and sense of belonging while supporting the school's commitment to developing confident, independent learners.

The school has established a highly effective rewards system that successfully promotes positive behaviour, engagement and aspiration across the school community. Pupils earn points throughout the day which accumulate into a monetary value that can be spent in the school shop, providing meaningful opportunities to develop important life skills such as money management, budgeting and decision-making. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the rewards available and the sense of achievement associated with earning them. One pupil proudly shared that he had earned a lunch with the Headteacher, an experience which may include a visit to a local restaurant such as Burger King or Pizza Express. It was evident that these opportunities are highly valued by pupils and contribute to a strong culture of celebration, motivation and success.



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Next Steps:

The school should continue to build upon its rich programme of community visits, cultural experiences, and enrichment opportunities by strengthening its evaluation of the long-term impact these experiences have on pupils' EHCP outcomes, independence, confidence, and personal development.

Following the outstanding success of the recent PGL residential, leaders should prioritise the continuation and further development of this opportunity. Staff reported significant gains in pupils' resilience, independence, self-esteem, teamwork, and willingness to engage in new challenges. The school should seek to embed residential experiences as a key component of its personal development offer, ensuring that increasing numbers of pupils can benefit from the transformative impact these experiences have on both their social and emotional development and readiness for adulthood.

Agreed Targets for next 12 Months

Target 1: To monitor and evaluate the impact of Evergreen on pupil regulation and behaviour, informing the development of *The Willows Way*.

Comments

The school has made a positive start in developing a phase-based Evergreen tracking system to better understand patterns of behaviour, regulation needs and the effectiveness of interventions across the school. Behaviour Leads have already started gathering and reviewing information relating to pupils accessing Evergreen, enabling emerging trends and recurring triggers to be identified. This has strengthened staff understanding of individual pupil needs and has supported more targeted responses to dysregulation. Leaders recognise that robust tracking will be essential in ensuring Evergreen continues to evolve as a purposeful intervention that contributes to improved behaviour, emotional wellbeing and engagement in learning.

A significant development has been the relocation and establishment of Evergreen within a more central and accessible area of the school. Leaders anticipate that this will further support consistent use of the provision and improve the quality of monitoring and data collection. As the provision becomes fully embedded, Behaviour Leads will continue to refine tracking systems at a phase level, enabling leaders to analyse trends, identify pupils requiring additional support and evaluate the impact of interventions over time. This work will provide valuable evidence to inform future decision-making and will contribute to the ongoing development of *The Willows Way*, ensuring that behaviour support remains responsive, proactive and firmly rooted in the needs of pupils with SEMH needs.

Target 2: To develop pupil case studies that evidence the impact of Evergreen on individual pupils' regulation, behaviour, wellbeing and engagement over time.

Comments

The school has made strong progress in developing a systematic approach to capturing and celebrating the impact of Evergreen through individual pupil case studies. Leaders recognised that whilst quantitative data provides valuable information regarding patterns of use and intervention outcomes, there is also a need for richer qualitative evidence that demonstrates pupils' personal journeys. During discussions, leaders outlined plans for each phase to identify a number of focus pupils through their regular pupil progress meetings. These pupils will be selected based on academic progress, engagement, and progress towards EHCP outcomes, ensuring that case studies reflect a broad range of needs and experiences across the school from different phases.

A notable strength of this work is the school's commitment to gathering evidence from multiple perspectives. Through pupil voice, staff observations, behaviour records, parent feedback and examples of successful interventions, the case studies will provide a comprehensive picture of each pupil's development over time. This approach aligns closely with the school's inclusive ethos and will enable staff to identify which regulation strategies and restorative approaches have the greatest impact on individual



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pupils. Leaders spoke confidently about the potential of the case studies to capture the often small but highly significant steps of progress that pupils with SEMH needs make on their journey towards greater independence and emotional regulation.

The case studies will also provide a valuable bridge between behaviour, wellbeing and learning outcomes. By linking Evergreen interventions directly to academic progress and EHCP targets, leaders will be able to demonstrate the wider impact of the provision on pupils' success in school. Over time, this evidence will support EHCP reviews, strengthen communication with families, and contribute to whole-school evaluation. As the project develops, these pupil journeys have the potential to become a powerful tool within *The Willows Way*, helping leaders to showcase effective practice, celebrate success, and further embed a culture of reflective and evidence-informed improvement.

Target 3: To embed and share effective Evergreen practice through The Willows Way, ensuring a consistent whole-school approach to supporting pupil regulation and positive behaviour.

Comments

The school is now well positioned to move beyond establishing Evergreen as a successful intervention space and focus on embedding its principles across all phases and classrooms. Leaders recognise that the greatest impact will come not simply from the use of a dedicated regulation space, but from ensuring that the strategies, language and approaches developed within Evergreen are consistently reflected throughout the school. Discussions highlighted a clear commitment to identifying, evaluating and capturing effective practice, enabling staff to better understand the approaches that support pupils to regulate, reflect and successfully re-engage with learning.

As part of the school's IQM Flagship Project, *The Willows Way: A Positive Behaviour Framework for Specialist Settings Supporting Pupils with SEMH as a Primary Need*, leaders intend to utilise evidence gathered through Evergreen monitoring, trend analysis and pupil case studies to further strengthen whole-school practice. Leaders also spoke enthusiastically about their aspiration to host an IQM Cluster meeting, providing an opportunity to showcase Evergreen and share the school's developing expertise with other settings. Through collaboration, professional dialogue and the dissemination of effective practice, the school is well placed to make a valuable contribution to the wider IQM network whilst continuing to refine and enhance its own inclusive approach to behaviour support.

Overview

During my visit to The Willows School Academy Trust, it was evident that the school continues to strengthen its inclusive ethos and has made significant progress across all areas of development. The school has created a culture where pupils feel safe, valued and genuinely part of the community. Staff, pupils and parent governor spoke passionately about the school's commitment to ensuring every pupil can achieve their potential, regardless of need. There is a strong sense that pupils are not only educated at The Willows but are truly "wanted here", supported to become the best version of themselves and encouraged to participate fully in school life.

A particular strength is the school's relational approach to working with families. Leaders have invested considerable time in building relationships with parents, creating a culture of trust, openness and partnership. This was repeatedly highlighted throughout the visit and was reflected in the school's motto, "Stronger Connections, Brighter Futures - Together We Make a Difference." The impact of this approach was clearly evident through the case studies shared by staff, demonstrating how strong home-school relationships have improved pupils' wellbeing, attendance, confidence and overall outcomes.

There is a clear and genuine bond between staff and families. Parents described feeling listened to, valued and supported, highlighting the school's commitment to positive communication. Teachers provide weekly phone calls to families, ensuring parents are regularly updated on their child's progress, achievements and wellbeing. Staff reported that parents highly value this contact, which helps strengthen trust and partnership working. Communication is purposeful and solution-focused, with an emphasis on celebrating successes rather than only contacting families when concerns arise.

The school has been highly successful in creating opportunities for families to engage in school life. Regular themed coffee mornings for example, yoga mornings, Christmas decoration events and wider community celebrations have significantly increased parental engagement. Christmas is clearly a major event within the school calendar, with excellent attendance from families and a strong sense of community spirit. Siblings are welcomed into many activities, resulting in families feeling that they belong to the wider school community. The parent governor consistently described the school as "one big family" where everyone is welcomed and support is always available.

Attendance is a significant strength of the school and reflects the positive culture that has been established. Attendance levels are exceptional and provide a clear indication that pupils enjoy attending school and feel safe within the learning environment. Of particular note is the fact that there are currently no pupils on a reduced timetable. The Attendance Officer and Family Liaison Officer work closely together to support families and ensure barriers to attendance are addressed quickly and effectively. Home visits are carried out where needed, providing an additional level of care and support for families. This proactive approach has contributed to pupils attending regularly and engaging successfully in school life.

Throughout my visit, pupils were observed to be happy, engaged and actively participating in highly adapted learning experiences. Pupils spoke enthusiastically

about school and explained how supported they feel by their teachers. Mathematics was frequently mentioned as a favourite subject, with pupils describing lessons as enjoyable and accessible. Their comments reflected a strong sense of belonging and confidence within the school environment.

The school's trauma-informed philosophy is clearly embedded throughout daily practice. Staff consistently use restorative language, positive behaviour support strategies and a shared vocabulary that promotes understanding, emotional regulation and positive relationships. Staff spoke highly of the extensive professional development they have received in trauma-informed practice. Rather than a one-off training event, CPD has been delivered through a continuous programme of professional learning, allowing staff to deepen their understanding, ask questions and reflect on how strategies can be effectively implemented through the "Willows Way."

This approach is particularly evident through the highly effective implementation of Evergreen, which has become an integral component of the school's behaviour and wellbeing provision. Behaviour team described Evergreen as a safe and supportive place where they can regulate emotions and successfully return to learning. Staff consistently reported that behaviour is viewed as communication and that support is proactive rather than reactive. The Behaviour Team received particularly positive feedback, with staff commenting on the supportive, non-judgemental culture that exists across the school. There was a strong sense that everyone works together to support pupils when they become dysregulated. Staff described colleagues as kind, understanding and solution-focused, creating an environment where they feel empowered and confident in meeting pupils' needs.

Pupil voice was especially powerful throughout the visit. Pupils spoke confidently about friendships, safety and belonging. Friendship was repeatedly identified as being important to them and pupils reported feeling comfortable speaking to any member of staff should they need support. They described teachers as kind, caring and respectful adults who model positive behaviour through their own actions. There was a clear sense that relationships underpin every aspect of school life and that pupils feel genuinely known and understood by staff.

The learning environment reflects the school's vision and values. Classrooms are calm, purposeful and highly inclusive, enabling pupils to access learning successfully. Staff spoke positively about the flexibility they are given to adapt lessons and curriculum content to meet individual needs. Teachers also highlighted the support provided by senior leaders, particularly regarding staff wellbeing. Access to supervision sessions for their wellbeing, a supportive leadership team and a culture of openness were all identified as key strengths. Staff consistently described The Willows as feeling like a family, a view echoed by the parent governor.

Enrichment opportunities continue to be a significant strength. Pupils access a wide range of educational visits, community experiences and Friday enrichment clubs including sports, movie clubs and other activities selected by pupils themselves. School trips were frequently identified as highlights of school life and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop confidence, independence and wider life experiences.



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A particularly significant highlight was the impact of the school's PGL residential trip. Staff spoke passionately about the transformation seen in pupils who attended, highlighting increases in confidence, resilience and self-esteem. Parents similarly commented to staff on the significant growth in independence they observed following the trip. The residential experience was described as invaluable and exemplified the school's commitment to preparing pupils for life beyond the classroom.

Technology has become increasingly embedded throughout the curriculum and is having a measurable impact on engagement and independence. Chromebooks are readily accessible to pupils and are used effectively alongside platforms such as, Times Tables Rock Stars and Numbots. Staff demonstrated how technology supports personalised learning and enables pupils to access the curriculum through a range of methods. Pupils are given increased autonomy and choice in how they engage with learning, whether through books, technology, independent research or alternative methods of recording work. Technology is also supporting the development of touch-typing, spelling, reading, written communication and independent learning skills. Staff reported noticeable improvements in confidence, engagement and motivation as a result.

Overall, The Willows School Academy Trust continues to demonstrate an exceptional commitment to inclusive practice. Leadership has successfully embedded systems, approaches and values that ensure pupils are supported academically, socially and emotionally. The school's strengths are evident in its outstanding relationships with families, exceptional attendance, trauma-informed culture, highly effective behaviour support systems, innovative use of technology, rich enrichment opportunities and unwavering commitment to pupil wellbeing. The result is a school community where pupils feel happy, safe, valued and ready to learn, where staff feel supported and empowered, and where families and school work together to secure the very best outcomes for every child. This is a school where inclusion is not simply an aspiration but a lived reality seen in every aspect of daily practice. Willows are definitely worthy of now moving towards Flagship status.

The school continues to move from strength to strength in terms of its superb inclusive practice and I am firmly of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark to pursue Flagship School status. I therefore recommend that the school moves to Flagship 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 Flagship status.

Assessor: Ms Jemini Lakhman

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd