



## Report on IQM Inclusive School Award



**School Name:** Leigh Academy Mascalls

**School Address:** Maidstone Road  
Tonbridge  
Kent  
TN12 6LT

**Head/Principal:** Jo Brooks

**IQM Lead:** Annie Fowler

**Assessment Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> May 2026

**Assessor:** Ms Vicky Stevens

### Sources of Evidence:

- IQM Self-Evaluation Report (SER)
- School Policies
- National Data and Performance Tables
- Local data
- Internal data
- School Website
- School Vision and Values
- School Development Plan
- Student work
- Parent, Students and Staff Voice
- Learning Walks
- Observation of community arrival at School
- Observation of unstructured time



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### Meetings Held with:

- Headteacher
- Senior Leaders
- IQM Co Ordinator
- SEND Team
- Chair of Governors
- Trustees
- Students
- Attendance Lead
- Assessment Lead
- Teaching and Learning Lead
- Curriculum Lead
- Behaviour Lead
- Enrichment Lead
- Safeguarding Staff
- Year Group Co-ordinators
- Young Carers
- Pastoral Staff
- Heads of Department
- Parents and Carers



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### Overall Evaluation

From the moment you arrive at Leigh Academy Mascalls, the school conveys a powerful sense of community, purpose and belonging. The physical arrival of buses, coaches, families and students creates a vivid picture of a diverse yet unified community coming together. This is not incidental; it reflects a deeply embedded inclusive ethos, one where every individual is welcomed, known and valued. The culture is immediately tangible: calm, purposeful and warm, with high expectations evident in both conduct and interaction.

Relationships are the defining strength of this school and sit at the heart of its inclusive culture. Students are known as individuals and supported through highly visible staff presence, consistent routines and strong pastoral systems. This is not a superficial feature, but a deliberate, strategic approach underpinned by training, leadership modelling and shared expectations. Inclusion is therefore not a series of isolated interventions but a coherent, lived experience embedded across all aspects of school life. A guiding principle of “work hard, be kind” is consistently translated into practice.

Student voice strongly reinforces this picture. Students describe the school as welcoming, responsive and safe. One student explained, “when you are walking around school, teachers say hello... if you are having a bad day you can talk to people and they will give you strategies to support you.” This reflects a culture where emotional literacy is developed and support is readily accessible through provision such as access to Wellbeing teams, the Hub and daily pastoral interactions. Students feel confident that concerns will be addressed quickly and effectively. They know that they “matter”.

The learning environment further reinforces inclusion. Spaces are thoughtfully designed to support both independence and wellbeing. The Hub is described by students as “a nice quiet space,” offering targeted support for regulation and learning. The library is a particularly striking example of inclusive design: a calm, welcoming space that is dyslexia-friendly, fully accessible and representative of diversity, including Black History, LGBTQ+ representation, mental health and wellbeing resources, and provision for girls’ health. Books and resources are accessible and within reach, ensuring that all students feel represented and included.

The curriculum is experienced by students as flexible, relevant and accessible. Inclusive teaching is effective. Staff use real-time data, including reading ages and group-level information, to inform adaptive practice. Technology plays a transformative role in enabling this. Universal access to Chromebooks removes barriers and supports independence. Enrichment is extensive and deliberately inclusive. Students benefit from a wide range of opportunities that build confidence, broaden experiences and enhance engagement. Participation rates are high, reflecting both the breadth of offer and the school’s success in removing barriers to involvement. Students demonstrate a strong sense of purpose, articulating the relevance of learning, “in all lessons you can see how this will fit the wider world... I look forward to lessons.”

The school’s context is complex and evolving, including high mobility, increasing disadvantage and the integration of over 200 students from a closing school. Despite



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this, leaders have secured strong outcomes alongside exceptional pastoral care. Attendance, behaviour and progress have all improved significantly, with outcomes above those of similar contexts. This demonstrates both the strength of leadership and the effectiveness of inclusive practice in driving improvement. The school’s work on improving attendance is to be commended. Leaders have established clear, systematic approaches to monitoring and early intervention, ensuring that barriers are identified and addressed swiftly. Strong pastoral support and effective engagement with families and external agencies underpin this work, promoting a culture where attendance is seen as a shared responsibility. As a result, students feel supported to attend regularly, enabling them to engage fully in their learning and school life. Students say they “want to be here.”

Behaviour is a significant strength and is underpinned by a trauma-informed approach centred on “connecting before correcting.” This approach ensures that behaviour systems are relational rather than punitive, preserving dignity and maintaining trust. De-escalation is a key feature of practice, and staff are skilled in responding to need. Students describe the school as “lovely,” “supportive,” “caring” and “a place where I am happy.” The consistency of this feedback reflects the strength of the culture.

Staff wellbeing is prioritised and strategically led. Systems are clear and supportive, including the use of a daily bulletin, defined communication boundaries (such as email cut-offs) and access to practical support including counselling, online GP services and financial support. Staff describe that “support is literally within reach daily.” This creates the conditions for staff to perform effectively, collaborate and sustain high-quality inclusive practice. Overall, the Academy demonstrates a deeply embedded culture of inclusion, where relationships, equity and opportunity underpin all aspects of practice. As one stakeholder reflected, this is a school defined by “community... a place where everyone truly belongs.”

I am of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark’s Inclusive School Award. I recommend that the school be awarded the Inclusive School Award and be reassessed in 3 years’ time.

I also recommend that the school should consider applying for Centre of Excellence status subject to the inclusion within its plans of the appropriate areas for development and the completion of the Centre of Excellence documentation. If the school chooses to pursue this status and it were to be awarded, the school would be subject to annual review from this point forwards.

### Assessor:

### Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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**Joe McCann MBA NPQH**  
 Chief Executive Officer  
 Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd



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### Element 1 - The Inclusion Values of the School

Inclusion is deeply embedded within the school's vision and values, captured in the principle of "no exceptions." This is not aspirational rhetoric but a consistently enacted philosophy. Every student is welcomed and expected to succeed, regardless of need or starting point. The small-school model is instrumental in enabling this, ensuring that students are known, relationships are strong and transitions are carefully managed.

Belonging is intentionally cultivated. Transition processes are robust, with a strong focus on ensuring that students feel part of the community from the outset. This is particularly evident in the successful integration of students from a closing school, who have been welcomed and supported to become part of the school community quickly and effectively.

Relationships are rooted in a shared moral purpose, frequently articulated as "kids come first." This principle underpins decision-making at all levels, from strategic leadership to classroom practice. Staff consistently prioritise student wellbeing and success, and this alignment creates coherence across the school.

Student voice is highly valued and actively developed. Opportunities for students to influence and shape their experience are meaningful and varied. The partnership with Charlton Football Club is a notable example, providing an alternative platform for student voice and aspiration, particularly for boys. This work reflects a willingness to innovate and respond to context, captured in the statement, "nothing is off the table here."

Staff voice further reinforces the strength of the culture. Staff report high levels of trust, support and professional pride. Comments such as "I love my job" and "we are so proud of our students" are indicative of a committed and cohesive workforce. There is a strong sense of collective responsibility, with staff and students working as one community.

#### Next Steps:

- Embed pupil voice - further develop student voice focusing on evidencing how vulnerable groups influence whole-school decision-making.
- Strengthen consistency of inclusive ethos - ensure all staff are able to articulate the EEF 5 a day adaptive teaching principles and how these translate into daily classroom practice



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### Element 2 - Leadership and Management and Accountability

Leadership is highly effective, values-driven and relentlessly focused on inclusion. Leaders demonstrate clarity of vision, strong moral purpose and a deep understanding of the school's context. Systems for monitoring, identification and review are robust and well-established.

Daily safeguarding and behaviour meetings exemplify this precision, ensuring that students are identified early and supported effectively. This creates a responsive system where issues are addressed quickly. Students recognise this, noting that "within a week any issues are fully resolved."

Students report that Leaders have implemented tangible improvements that directly impact student experience. These include increased staffing to strengthen pastoral support and timetable adaptations, such as additional breaks for FSM pupils, to support wellbeing and readiness to learn.

Teaching and learning are monitored closely, with leaders maintaining strong visibility and understanding of classroom practice. Staff demonstrate a high level of responsiveness, routinely checking for understanding and adapting support accordingly.

Governance is a significant strength. Trustees and Governors are highly engaged, knowledgeable and committed. There is a strong culture of first-hand understanding, captured in the statement: "We are not an add-on, we are the Academy." Regular visits, direct engagement with students and triangulation of data ensure that governance is both supportive and challenging.

Governors and Trustees demonstrate a deep understanding of inclusion and the school's priorities. They have played an active role in supporting the integration of students from a closing school, recognising that these students have been, "seamlessly woven into the fabric" of the community. Training is comprehensive and ongoing, ensuring that governance remains effective and informed.

#### Next Steps:

- Formalise student leadership in inclusion - expand the role of student leaders (learning walks, feedback on adaptive teaching, SEND provision review) with clear impact tracking.



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### **Element 3 - Curriculum – Structure, Pupil Engagement and Adaption**

The curriculum is ambitious, inclusive and carefully designed to meet the needs of all students. Outcomes are strong and compare favourably to similar schools, reflecting both the quality of provision and the effectiveness of implementation.

A defining feature is the universal access to technology. Every student has access to a Chromebook, removing barriers to learning and ensuring equity. Provision for EAL learners is strong, with effective use of translation tools alongside structured induction and ongoing support.

Technology is not an addition but an integral part of the learning experience. Students articulate how this supports access, “I can change font, background... using apps helps me access the curriculum effortlessly.”

Digital platforms ensure continuity of learning, meaning there are “no gaps,” and communication with staff is streamlined. For example, Read&Write software is embedded across the school, supporting reading, writing and independence. Students are trained in its use, ensuring that it is used effectively to enhance learning rather than simply as a support tool.

The curriculum balances academic rigour with flexibility and creativity. The IB Middle Years Programme provides a strong framework, supporting coherence and depth of learning. Pathways are designed to recognise different strengths, ensuring that all students can experience success. Students value these curriculum pathways that they say, “recognise their strengths”, including coursework-based routes which “take the pressure away.”

Curriculum flexibility is evident, for example through bespoke pathways in subjects such as drama, enabling meaningful participation for all pupils. Students experience the curriculum as relevant and purposeful. They recognise how learning connects to the wider world and future aspirations. Relationships with teachers further enhance engagement, ensuring that learning is accessible and meaningful.

Strong relationships with teachers further reduce anxiety and support engagement. Students describe staff as “very approachable.”

#### **Next Step:**

To continue to revisit and reflect upon curriculum design to ensure appropriate levels of challenge and engagement are weaved throughout each subject area and opportunities for IDUs are accessible for all students.



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### **Element 4 - Teaching and Learning – Learning Environment, Planning Resources, Pedagogy**

Teaching is underpinned by a clear and coherent framework, rooted in the Academy’s belief that every learner is entitled to both challenge and access. The “Challenge for All” approach ensures consistently high expectations, with teaching pitched ambitiously while embedding responsive scaffolds to secure success for all pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged.

Planning is purposeful and informed. Staff draw on a rich evidence base, including prior attainment, diagnostic assessment and detailed SEND and reading profiles, to shape learning that builds incrementally across sequences of lessons.

Clear learning intentions and success criteria are supported by adaptive strategies at each stage, ensuring pupils are supported to access and apply knowledge. Teaching is grounded in evidence-informed practice. Approaches such as Rosenshine’s principles, explicit modelling and the gradual release model are utilised across departments. Visualisers and interactive technologies are used effectively to clarify thinking, model excellence and support understanding. Technology enhances, rather than replaces, strong pedagogy.

Support staff are deployed strategically and make a strong contribution to inclusive practice. They are well-trained in adaptive approaches, behaviour regulation and digital tools, and work closely with teachers to align support with lesson objectives.

Professional development is a key driver of consistency and improvement. StepLab coaching, weekly pedagogy sessions and protected CPD time foster a culture of reflective practice, collaboration and continual refinement. Quality assurance processes, including lesson visits and book reviews, are rigorous and developmental, contributing to strong staff morale and increasingly consistent practice across the Academy.

Learning environments are calm, purposeful and inclusive. Classrooms reinforce expectations, independence and belonging through carefully considered displays, routines and access to high-quality, inclusive resources.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Develop and implement whole-school expectations for slide design (e.g. font, layout, chunking of information, use of visuals and dual coding) to support clarity and reduce cognitive load for all learners, particularly SEND and EAL pupils.
- Continue to embed consistent adaptive teaching practices across all classrooms.



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### Element 5 – Assessment

Assessment is integral to the Academy’s commitment to both challenge and inclusion, forming a continuous part of the learning process rather than a standalone measure of attainment.

It is purposeful and used effectively to inform teaching, identify need and secure progress for all pupils. Formative assessment, questioning, retrieval practice and regular checking for understanding are a priority within lessons. This enables teachers to identify misconceptions swiftly and adapt teaching in real time, ensuring learning remains responsive and inclusive.

Teachers draw on a rich range of prior attainment and diagnostic information to shape learning. Baseline assessments, including NGRT reading data and Sparx platforms, provide a clear understanding of pupils’ starting points and enable early identification of gaps in phonics, fluency and comprehension.

Detailed learner profiles, including SEND information, are used strategically to inform adaptive planning and targeted intervention. This ensures that all pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, build knowledge on secure foundations while maintaining high levels of ambition.

A clear and coherent assessment framework supports consistency across the Academy. Termly data collections, alongside performance information and departmental review, allow leaders and teachers to track progress over time, analyse the performance of key groups and respond to emerging needs. This is triangulated with lesson visits and work scrutiny, ensuring that assessment information is accurate and directly informs curriculum refinement and teaching practice.

Pupils are active participants in the assessment process. Success criteria are clear and, where appropriate, co-constructed, enabling pupils to understand what success looks like and to evaluate their own work against it. Strategies such as structured oracy, peer discussion and collaborative review support the development of metacognition and independence, strengthening pupils’ ability to reflect on and improve their learning.

Digital technology further strengthens both assessment and inclusion. Chromebooks and online platforms enable pupils to demonstrate understanding in different ways and access feedback readily. These approaches support independence while ensuring accessibility for all learners.

#### Next Step:

To continue to develop methods of collating assessment information effectively to identify and address gaps, errors and misconceptions in pupils’ knowledge.



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### **Element 6 - Behaviour, Attitudes to Learning and Personal Development**

Behaviour systems are underpinned by strong relationships and a deep understanding of pupil context. The school's trauma-informed approach ensures that behaviour is understood and supported rather than simply managed.

The Hub is a standout feature, offering tailored support, regulation strategies, and social development opportunities. EBSA pathways, the Young Carers network and mental health provision are particularly strong.

Attendance at the Academy is strong and improving, currently at 92.2% and above national, with particularly notable gains for SEND, EAL and Pupil Premium pupils over a sustained three-year period. Leaders are clear that this improvement has not been driven by headline-chasing or isolated initiatives. Instead, they describe their approach as "forensic rather than revolutionary", grounded in careful analysis of patterns over time. This analysis feeds directly into weekly multi-disciplinary meetings that bring together attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and SEND, ensuring a holistic understanding of each pupil's context.

A graduated response to attendance is consistently applied. Initial concerns are addressed through support-first communication, including a "touch-base" letter that highlights concerns while signposting families to appropriate support. Relationships and trust are prioritised throughout.

The Academy also developed a comprehensive attendance support pack for parents and pupils, signposting families to a wide range of internal and external support. This includes guidance around financial pressures, housing instability, bereavement and EBSA, acknowledging the real-world factors that can affect attendance and parental decision-making. Student voice is integral to this work, helping leaders understand lived barriers and refine strategy accordingly.

Behaviour systems are equally strong and rooted in consistency and belonging. Leaders are clear that, "there is no better research than your own school", and routinely triangulate stakeholder voice, internal data and visits to other Trust schools to refine their approach. The small-school model, alongside a robust behaviour policy, ensures pupils are known well and supported early. Daily behaviour panel meetings bring together a range of professional voices, allowing bespoke responses and avoiding escalation.

#### **Next Step:**

To develop the use of digital platforms to support interventions for students to improve and offer strategic reflection opportunities to improve behaviour, attitudes to learning and progress.



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### Element 7 - Parents, Carers and Guardians

Partnership with parents and carers is a significant strength of the school and is characterised by trust, responsiveness and a genuinely inclusive approach that extends beyond the individual student to the wider family. This is particularly evident in areas such as EBSA support and Young Carers, where close collaboration, shared planning and consistent communication ensure that barriers are addressed effectively and sensitively.

Parents speak highly of the school's relational approach, highlighting that staff take time to understand both the student and their context. One parent reflected that, "the school knows my child well," while another emphasised that the school had provided support, not only for their child but for the whole family. This holistic approach is further reinforced by parents who describe the school as "patient" and responsive to the fact that needs "can change on a daily basis." There is strong evidence that the school delivers on its commitment to treat students as individuals. Parents who had previously experienced settings where needs were not fully recognised describe the school as a contrast, noting that the school has "kept its promise" in recognising individuality. This reflects a deeply embedded inclusive ethos where difference is understood and valued.

Communication with families is appropriately balanced. Parents report regular, meaningful contact through a range of channels, including weekly newsletters, direct communication from teachers, parents' evenings and informal updates such as phone calls celebrating success. One parent described this as "not excessive, it is just enough," highlighting the school's ability to maintain strong communication without overwhelming families. Provision such as SENCO coffee mornings further strengthens engagement and accessibility.

Parents express a high level of confidence in the school's ability to keep students safe, included and treated fairly. They describe a culture where concerns are addressed quickly and effectively, both with students and in partnership with families. As one parent shared, "the school jumps on any issues really quickly," reflecting confidence in systems and leadership.

Targeted provision is also highly valued by parents, particularly for vulnerable groups. The support for young carers is identified as a key strength, with parents highlighting the importance of their child having a community where they can "share and offload" and feel that "they are not on their own." This reflects the wider impact of the school's inclusive systems, which extend beyond academic support to emotional wellbeing and belonging.

#### Next Step:

Develop targeted parent voice opportunities for key groups - introduce structured opportunities (surveys, forums, workshops) to capture and respond to the views of parents of SEND, PP and attendance - vulnerable pupils.



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### **Element 8 - Links with Local, Wider and Global Community**

The Academy's small-school model ensures that every student is known, valued and supported, fostering a strong sense of belonging that underpins engagement, wellbeing and success.

This inclusive culture is strengthened by highly effective partnerships with a wide range of external agencies, including mental health services and community organisations, ensuring that students benefit from comprehensive and joined-up support.

Provision for students with English as an Additional Language offers carefully structured induction, translation support and ongoing monitoring enabling rapid integration and full access to the curriculum.

At the same time, staff wellbeing is prioritised through clear systems, protected time and visible, approachable leadership, contributing to a culture of trust, transparency and sustained professional confidence.

Community engagement is integral to the Academy's identity. Strong partnerships with local organisations, feeder schools, faith groups and wider networks create rich opportunities for collaboration, while events such as the OnMas Summer Festival exemplify how the arts are used to bring people together and celebrate diversity and inclusion.

Students play an active role in shaping and contributing to their community through volunteering, charity work, performances, mentoring and environmental initiatives, demonstrating high levels of responsibility and social awareness. Post-16 mentoring and wider leadership opportunities further strengthen student voice and agency.

The Academy also plays a key outward-facing role, welcoming visitors, sharing best practice and contributing to Trust and regional networks, reinforcing its reputation as an inclusive, collaborative and outward-looking organisation.

The global dimension of the school's work is closely aligned to its International Baccalaureate ethos and commitment. Long-standing partnerships, particularly with the Tanzania school, enrich the curriculum and provide meaningful opportunities for students to engage with international issues.

#### **Next Step:**

Strengthen and evidence impact of partnership work - further develop links (Bereko and wider partnerships) to enhance cultural understanding, inclusion and global awareness for pupil.