Overall Evaluation

Link AP Academy presents as a highly relational, responsive, and ambitious alternative provision. Inclusion is visible in the removal of practical barriers, the calm and respectful culture, small-group teaching, personalised support, daily communication, and the determination to re-engage pupils who have experienced sustained difficulty in mainstream education. Evidence from leaders, staff, pupils, and a parent was notably consistent. Pupils described feeling welcomed, listened to and safe; staff could explain how they adapt teaching and respond to need; and parental testimony illustrated substantial improvement in attendance, confidence, friendships, and readiness to learn.

The inclusive ethos is most convincing where it is translated into ordinary routines. Individual welcomes, prepared learning, supported social times and regular staff briefings help pupils encounter a predictable environment. Pupils described respectful relationships and adults who respond when they need help. Their examples of changes to classroom arrangements, individual support and activities indicate that pupil voice influences provision rather than simply being collected. This responsiveness is particularly important for pupils whose previous experiences have made attendance, trust, and participation difficult.

The parent interview provided a powerful illustration of this approach. The account linked a supportive induction and staff understanding of individual needs with improvements in confidence, friendships, self-care, and willingness to learn. Staff also responded to parental information about communication preferences by adapting classroom support. This testimony strongly supports the assessment of a relational culture.

Practical attendance support is closely connected to the provision's inclusive purpose. Morning contact, transport, and communication with families address barriers before they become prolonged absence. The reported reintegration of pupils to mainstream education is a significant feature of the evidence, alongside the absence of reported suspensions.

Teaching combines small groups, calm routines, and flexible explanation with an expectation that pupils can achieve. Staff described using real-life examples, vocabulary support, model answers, chunking, and immediate feedback without assuming that SEMH needs imply low academic ability. Pupils could explain current learning and how teachers help them understand errors. Core-subject sequencing was articulated clearly.

The strongest practice lies in relationships, attendance support, safeguarding vigilance, responsiveness to pupil and family voice, and the purposeful reintegration of pupils. The provision has successfully reintegrated 14 pupils to mainstream education, reported no suspensions, and uses transport and morning contact to prevent attendance barriers. The evidence also identifies a clear next phase of development: formalising independent oversight, strengthening the curriculum and assessment evidence trail, demonstrating impact over time, and evaluating community and enrichment partnerships more systematically.

Leaders have developed complementary roles in education, curriculum, attendance, welfare, and safeguarding, supported by daily professional discussion and external advice. There is a clear drive to strengthen formal independent oversight, building on the challenge provided by consultants and commissioning partners. Leaders identify an advisory and scrutiny board, with clear responsibilities, recorded challenge and an action log, as the next step. As provision expands, common expectations and independent review will help sustain the quality of pupils' experiences across centres.

The existing baseline and review arrangements provide a foundation for a coherent assessment trail. Referral information, academic assessments, individual targets, attendance, engagement, and SEMH indicators connect to identifiable actions and review decisions. Moderation with commissioning-school specialists strengthen confidence in judgements. Pupils and families understand starting points, progress, remaining barriers, and the support planned, with responsibilities clearly shared between Link and commissioning schools.

Local partnerships extend access to sport, careers, college experiences, and community opportunities. Their value is evident in the range of experiences described, but participation alone does not establish impact. Building on the range of partnership experiences, recording intended outcomes, pupil feedback, observed learning, and follow-up offers a clear opportunity to demonstrate their contribution more fully. The responsive, personal approach to family engagement provides a strong foundation for more systematic feedback, accessible information, and planned transition support.

Taken together, the evidence supports recognition of inclusive practice while identifying a focused improvement agenda. The immediate priority is not to replace the relational model, but to secure it through independent challenge, consistent documentation, and evidence of sustained outcomes. The recommendations across the eight elements provide a connected route towards that goal and a stronger basis for considering Centre of Excellence status in future.

I am of the opinion 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 three years' time.

Assessor: Ms Sue Wight

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:



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