

# What makes inclusion work?

A briefing for local authority and trust leaders

KALEIDOSCOPE INCLUSION INDEX | SEPTEMBER 2026

## Beyond averages. Evidence with people still in it.

Inclusion becomes meaningful through everyday experience: learning that reflects people's lives, support that meets their needs, relationships they trust and opportunities to influence decisions. The September Inclusion Index examines what students, staff, parents and carers value, where experiences differ and what leaders can build on. It draws on Kaleidoscope's mixed-methods evidence base and national parent and carer survey. Our wider evidence base includes more than 36,000 survey contributions and 2.82 million quantitative and qualitative data points.

**How can the experiences people value become more dependable across settings and communities?**

## Five lenses for system leadership



### Identity | Ask whose experience is visible

**44.9% of student responses were positive about curriculum representation.**

An overall picture of provision can conceal differences in who feels recognised. Listening across identities and circumstances can help leaders examine whose experiences inform curriculum, support and improvement priorities.

**Leadership question:** Whose perspectives shape our understanding of inclusion, and whose are still missing?



### Experience | Look beneath the overall picture

**Staff belonging: 79.0% positive among those reporting no disability or additional needs; 53.7% among those reporting additional needs.**

This difference prompts closer enquiry into how working conditions and support are experienced. For trusts and LAs, examining variation can help identify where shared support is useful and where a response needs to reflect particular needs.

**Leadership question:** Where do experiences differ, and what can people tell us about the conditions behind those differences?

# From insight to shared action



## Voice | Make the response to feedback visible

**57.0% positive: parent/carer views on action following feedback.**

Leaders should ensure feedback informs decisions and communities hear what follows, including when change is not possible.

**Leadership question:** Can people see how their contributions influence decisions within schools and across the wider system?



## Social Capital | Make trusted relationships dependable

**64.6% of student responses were positive about having an adult they could speak to honestly.**

Trusted relationships are a resource leaders can recognise and sustain. Transitions, staff changes and movement between services provide useful points at which to examine continuity and access to trusted adults.

**Leadership question:** How do we help every learner find someone they trust, and maintain that connection when circumstances change?



## Environment | Examine how provision is experienced

**51.3% of staff responses were positive about provision meeting their needs.**

The availability of support is a starting point. Understanding whether people can access & use it adds evidence for decisions about resources, routines and working environments.

**Leadership question:** What needs to change within individual settings, and what requires coordinated action or investment?

## Three priorities for leaders

### Recognise valued practice

Identify what people describe positively and investigate the conditions supporting it.

**Recognise valued practice. Understand its conditions.**

### Agree priorities together

Involve students, staff and families in deciding what to sustain or improve.

### Review people's experience

Return to communities to understand whether changes are reaching them.

**Make it more dependable.**

## Explore your local picture

Kaleidoscope helps schools, trusts and local authorities bring quantitative patterns and qualitative voice together through five Kaleidoscopic Data™ lenses, informing the development, delivery and review of Inclusion Strategies.

To discuss your local inclusion priorities:  
[info@kaleidoscope-research.org](mailto:info@kaleidoscope-research.org)

[Read the full Inclusion Index](#)



About the evidence: Percentages show positive responses to selected survey questions. Findings reflect participating voices and should not be treated as representative of all schools or populations. Comparisons are descriptive and should be interpreted alongside local evidence. Source: Kaleidoscope (2026), Inclusion Index, September edition. See the full report for research context and interpretation.

# Beyond averages. Evidence with people still in it.



Kaleidoscope's platform brings quantitative patterns and qualitative voice together through five Kaleidoscopic Data™ lenses. Understand what works, recognise differences in experience and use that evidence to develop, deliver and review your Inclusion Strategy with your community.

## 01 Listen

Hear what students, staff and families value, what supports them and whose perspectives are missing.

Parent and carer surveys join the platform in Spring 2027.

## 02 Interpret

Use the 5 Kaleidoscopic Data™ lenses to examine patterns alongside personal accounts & experiences.

## 03 Prioritise

Agree with your community which strengths to build on and which barriers need attention first.

## 04 Act & Sustain

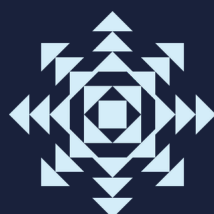
Set responsibilities, put agreed actions into practice & return to your community to understand what has changed.



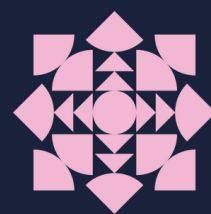
Identity



Experience



Voice



Social Capital



Environment

**“This wasn’t just about collecting data;  
it was about empowering our community.”**

Amy Wilby, Headteacher, Batley Trust

## What does inclusion feel like across your local area?

Explore how Kaleidoscope can help your local authority hear from school communities, understand differences in experience and identify shared priorities for action.

Book an introductory conversation about your local inclusion priorities:  
[info@kaleidoscope-research.org](mailto:info@kaleidoscope-research.org)