



Report on IQM Inclusive School Award



School Name: Astmoor Primary School

School Address: Kingshead Close
Castlefields
Runcorn Cheshire
WA7 2JE

Head/Principal Mrs Louisa Aldridge

IQM Lead Mrs Louisa Aldridge

Assessment Date 16th June 2025

Assessor Ms Louise McCallion

Sources of Evidence:

- Learning Walk – indoor and outdoor learning environment
- Lesson Drop Ins
- Pupils' books
- School Website
- Social Media
- Key Documents addressing the eight IQM elements including Staff Handbook, Case Studies

Meetings Held with:

- Pupils
- Parents/Carers/Guardians
- Governors
- Senior Leadership Team and Family Support Worker
- Teaching Assistants
- FS and KS1 Teachers
- KS2 Teachers
- Curriculum Leaders



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Overall Evaluation

Astmoor Primary School is a smaller than average primary school sitting in the heart of the community it serves. It is a welcoming, caring, and nurturing school where kindness and compassion are at the heart of everything they do. Inclusion is not an 'add on' at Astmoor Primary School, it is interwoven into every aspect of their practice. It is embedded so thoroughly into the culture of the school that staff sometimes do not even recognise how exceptional their work is because *"it's just what they do."*

During the assessment, every member of the school community extended a warm and genuine welcome. It was immediately evident that the staff are a dedicated team of professionals, wholly focused on one thing: achieving the best outcomes for the children and making a meaningful difference to their lives. A keen sense of togetherness permeates the school. Both staff and pupils described feeling supported, happy, and safe, this feeling was echoed in several heartfelt testimonials and cards from a variety of stakeholders. An atmosphere of mutual respect and care permeates throughout the school contributing to the overall positive experience of being part of this school 'family.'

The Headteacher and her team have created a supportive environment where children feel safe, enabling them to thrive in their learning and grow into confident, responsible citizens. They are committed to unlocking each child's potential by fostering conditions where effective learning can flourish. They strive to break down barriers to learning and participation, offering every child the chance to succeed and feel valued for their unique strengths and differences.

As a staff team, they work collaboratively to create a warm, welcoming atmosphere, while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum which is relevant to their context. One staff member described inclusion at Astmoor as *"engrained in the ethos."* The staff demonstrate a deep understanding of their pupils' needs, making every possible adaptation, no matter how small, to support individual learners. This highly personalised approach enhances both pupil wellbeing and progress. There is a powerful sense of professional support within the team. Staff turnover is low, and the team are cohesive and share common values around inclusion.

The pupils at Astmoor are proud to attend such an inclusive school and recognise that the staff go above and beyond for them. The pupils that the assessor met on the day embodied the school rules: Ready, Respect, Safe. They were keen and enthusiastic to share many aspects of school life and their own lived experiences. The children themselves demonstrated inclusive values, they are responsive to the needs of each other, they are respectful of diversity and of their peers with special educational needs or disabilities. The children speak confidently and with joy about their experiences at school. They clearly love being at this school, frequently referring to the support they receive from staff during difficult times. Pupils who met with the assessor were proud to discuss topics such as diversity, difference and share details of their own learning needs and lived experiences, reflecting the inclusive and open culture that the school fosters.



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The learning environment at Astmoor is calm, consistent, and thoughtfully presented across the school. High-quality teaching combined with personalised adjustments where needed, support best outcomes for pupils. Classrooms are aesthetically cohesive, featuring neutral tones, minimal distractions, and carefully considered layouts to support inclusion. A clear consistency is evident across all classrooms which contributes to a sense of stability for pupils. The school is blessed with abundant outdoor space, of which it makes the most of, to provide a range of outdoor experiences and play opportunities. Both the indoor and outdoor learning environments are impeccably presented.

The school's commitment to pastoral care and wider family support is exceptional. The Family Support Worker and leadership team were repeatedly praised by parents and children alike for the high level of care and support they provide. The trust and appreciation from families was echoed by the parents, carers, and guardians who came out of their way to meet with the assessor on the day.

Astmoor's reputation for inclusion and for supporting vulnerable children is well known. The work they do is valued and recognised by a range of external agencies and they are well respected within the Local Authority. They have a higher-than-average number of pupils in the care of the Local Authority and go above and beyond to meet their needs and to support carers. When the Headteacher was approached and asked if the school would establish two specialist resource bases for pupils with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs, the decision to accept was immediate. This reflects the school's unwavering commitment to ensuring that all children, regardless of need, have access to a nurturing and inclusive education.

I am of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark's Inclusive School Award. There are only minor areas requiring development and the school is aware of these. I recommend that the school be awarded the Inclusive School Award and be reassessed in three years' time.

Assessor: Louise McCallion

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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



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Element 1 - The Inclusion Values of the School

The school's ethos reflects a deep commitment to ensuring that every child is welcomed, valued, and supported to thrive regardless of background or circumstances. Their Inclusion Promise is central to this and demonstrates their commitment to having a truly inclusive school. They have agreed a ten point 'pledge' which highlights how they will ensure that inclusion is at the heart of all that they do, for example, *"showing respect, empathy and love for each child."* and *"Getting to know each child to understand them; building relationships, providing a safe and nurturing context."* During the visit it was evident that the whole team are on this mission together and this 'Inclusion Promise' is the foundation of their school.

Throughout the day, the assessor met with various members of the school community who consistently highlighted the unwavering dedication of the Headteacher and their team in supporting the holistic development of all pupils and their families. Relationships form the foundation of the school community, with staff demonstrating a strong, shared commitment to nurturing every child, particularly the most vulnerable, including those in the care of the Local Authority. All parties that were met during the assessment expressed that they feel valued, respected, and welcome in this school. Staff conveyed how they support each other, showing care and compassion to one another and pupils alike.

Support and provision are continually evolving, driven by a collective sense of responsibility across the whole school community. Adults model warm, positive, and relational approaches, creating an environment where any pre-existing barriers to participation are removed. The simple but effective school rules 'Ready, Respect, Safe' are not only evident in signage and literature around the school, but exemplified by the adults and embodied in the children. Pupils met on the day were observed to be ready, respectful, and safe in lessons and around school. During a pupil meeting, they expressed to the assessor that they feel respected and safe in their school.

Astmoor is proudly outward-facing, with a reputation for inclusive, responsive, and community-centred practice. They are well respected and valued for their work locally, and this is reflected in the opening of two Local Authority resource bases for pupils with SEMH needs. During the visit, a number of testimonials from current and former pupils, families and staff members were a joy to read containing comments such as *"duty of care that is above and beyond," "Your care love and passion shine through."* And *"Thank you for believing in them and making adjustments so they could participate in every aspect."*

Next Steps:

- Succession planning considering forthcoming changes to school leadership.



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Element 2 - Leadership and Management and Accountability

The school has a very stable leadership team with a long serving Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher. Their shared values and vision are reflected in a deeply embedded culture of inclusion, collaboration, and sense of community. Staff support the inclusive ethos and vision and are willing to respond to whatever challenges this may bring because they feel respected and valued.

The governing body demonstrates a strong understanding of the school's context and is held in high regard by the wider community, including Local Authority services and other schools. The school is led by a well-respected and highly valued Leadership Team, headed by a dedicated Headteacher who, alongside her Senior Leaders, approaches every aspect of school life with a child-centred and holistic perspective. Their commitment to meeting the full range of pupil needs is evident in all aspects of the school's practice.

The governing body plays a crucial and effective role in supporting and challenging the Leadership Team. Governors bring a broad and relevant range of experience and expertise. The governing body is full, recruitment is strong, and retention is high, reflecting the positive reputation and values of the school. The Chair of Governors, in post for over a decade, ensures consistent oversight, open dialogue, and support for the Headteacher, including regular well-being check-ins. The Governors are frequent visitors to the school.

Staff feel leaders are approachable and responsive to feedback, contributing to a culture of mutual respect and professional growth. Subject leaders regularly report to the governing body. Staff well-being is a key priority. Initiatives such as "*Well-being Wednesdays*," termly well-being reports, and regular debriefs for staff are testament to leaders' commitment to valuing and sustaining its team. A designated Well-being Governor helps maintain focus on this, and the governing body frequently engages in gestures of appreciation and support, recognising the demands placed on staff in this highly inclusive setting. The Leadership Team maintains strong partnerships with external agencies, particularly the Local Authority's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) team. There is clear two-way communication, and the school is seen as outward-facing and responsive.

Next Steps:

- To continue succession planning for the imminent changes in leadership of the school and support the learning community through this.



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Element 3 - Curriculum – Structure, Pupil Engagement and Adaption

Leaders have designed and implemented a curriculum that is tailored to reflect the values, needs, and context of the school. Leaders have ensured that it is ambitious, engaging, and inclusive. The curriculum is delivered thematically, allowing for depth and coherence across subjects while providing flexibility to meet pupils' diverse needs. Leaders have made conscious choices about how each theme is introduced to provide prolific opportunities for personal development.

The curriculum is firmly rooted in high-quality literature. Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading across the school, enhancing it with regular access to carefully selected texts that are both representative and meaningful. These texts support not only reading fluency and comprehension but also reflect the diversity of pupils' lives and the wider world. This strong reading culture reinforces the school's inclusive ethos and fosters a love of reading in all pupils.

During the visit, pupils were eager and confident when sharing their learning. They spoke positively about their experiences and understood the topics they were exploring. A range of pupil books were reviewed; they demonstrated consistency in approaches across the school including SEMH bases. High-quality learning was observed during the book scrutiny, on display around school and in action during a learning walk. The learning seen showed a keen sense of pride, purpose, and progression, evidencing the school's commitment to high standards. There was a clear consistency in approaches across various subjects and across the whole school. High standards of handwriting and presentation were observed across the school.

Vocabulary development is a key feature across the curriculum. It was evident from both the learning walk and book scrutiny that staff place a high emphasis on language and vocabulary acquisition. Through explicit teaching of subject-specific and high-level vocabulary, staff are equipping pupils with the tools they need to succeed both in school and beyond.

The Astmoor curriculum is designed not only to meet statutory expectations but to inspire, empower, and prepare pupils for their future lives. It reflects a deep understanding and knowledge of the pupils and the local context, is inclusive by design, and is delivered with passion and purpose. Leaders pledge to continue to reflect, modify and change their school curriculum to reflect the ever-changing world their pupils live in.

Next Steps:

- To further embed the use of knowledge organisers across the curriculum.
- To design and build a robust curriculum for SEMH provisions that compliments the existing curriculum.



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

It was a pleasure to take in the learning environment at Astmoor during this assessment; the quality and aesthetic of the learning environment belies the true age of the building. The Headteacher and her team have developed a consistently calm, positive, and inclusive learning environment. Classrooms are aesthetically cohesive, featuring neutral tones, minimal distractions, and carefully considered layouts to support inclusion. A clear consistency is evident across all classrooms which contributes to a sense of stability for pupils.

Purposeful adaptations such as safe spaces, quiet zones, and designated retreat areas like the "Thrive Hive" have been established throughout the school to support emotional regulation and wellbeing. The school grounds are extensive and well-utilised, offering children choice and independence in a highly supervised and structured outdoor environment. Classrooms are light, airy, well-organised and throughout the school a range of adaptations are evident such as visual timetables, emotion check-ins and equipment to support a diverse range of learner needs. Teachers and support staff respond sensitively to emerging needs, using strategies such as social stories, daily check-ins, and emotionally attuned language.

A child-centred approach is evident in all aspects of curriculum planning, with the needs of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and vulnerable pupils placed at the forefront. In discussions with pupils, they commented that the teachers are *"good at giving extra help with needs for example we have the bases in KS1 and KS2, we have smaller classes with a lot of teachers and a very calming environment."*

Teachers use ongoing assessment for learning to inform next steps and adapt provision accordingly. Routines are well-established and predictable, enabling children to feel secure and ready to learn. Pupils who spoke with the assessor during the day commented on how much they love their lessons and that they feel safe in the school environment. Subject leaders regularly monitor and audit resources to ensure they remain purposeful and effective. A range of technologies are used to support learning and engagement such as visualisers and QR codes. Teaching at Astmoor is responsive, inclusive, and underpinned by a strong understanding of each child's context and needs. Staff are skilled in using adaptive teaching strategies to ensure lessons are accessible, engaging and appropriately challenging. Professional development is well embedded, and there is a strong culture of collaboration.

Next Steps:

- To further enhance and update the EYFS outdoor area.
- To further plan for and embed the curriculum in the SEMH bases.



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Element 5 – Assessment

During the assessment it was clear that the entire team at Astmoor have a deep knowledge and understanding of their pupils. This understanding underpins all teaching and leadership decisions to ensure that assessment is meaningful, inclusive, and closely aligned with the school's core values. Teachers routinely use ongoing assessment for learning within lessons to gauge pupil understanding and tailor their instruction accordingly. Strategies include skilled questioning, mini-plenaries, peer discussion, quizzes, and visual checks. Adaptations to meet a wide range of needs were evident during the assessment and pupils record their learning in a variety of ways including the effective use of photographic evidence and alternative formats where appropriate.

Consistency in practice is evident across the school. The use of standardised formats such as common fonts, tramlines, and layouts supports accessibility and familiarity for all learners. High-quality work and carefully presented pupil books were observed, demonstrating pride in learning and a clear progression over time. The impact of a whole-school focus on handwriting is particularly notable, with improvements evident across cohorts.

Assessment is not confined to academic subjects. For SEMH needs, tools such as the Boxall Profile, Thrive assessments, and Resilience in Schools and Education (RISE) measures, are used to better understand pupils' experiences and inform support strategies.

Senior Leaders have developed simple but effective systems for collecting, collating, and analysing pupil data. Termly data in reading, writing, and mathematics is collected and analysed by the Deputy Headteacher. The outcomes form the basis for structured pupil progress meetings where support strategies and deployment of Teaching Assistants (TAs) are discussed and prioritised. Subject leaders monitor progress in their curriculum areas by analysing assessment data at the end of each teaching block and again at the end of the academic year. This information informs subject-specific action planning, ensuring that teaching continues to evolve in response to pupil needs and attainment patterns. At class level, teachers are proactive in using attainment and observational data to shape daily and weekly teaching.

Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress through regular updates, written reports, and conversations. The school strives to communicate clearly and honestly, helping families understand their child's learning journey and how they can support it at home. Relationships between staff and pupils are a key strength. These relationships enable staff to notice subtle changes in pupil behaviour or mood, which can then be addressed quickly.

Next Steps:

- To develop an agreed and consistent approach to sharing learning intentions with children.



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Element 6 - Behaviour, Attitudes to Learning and Personal Development

During the visit, the assessor met a range of pupils from across the school and found them to be consistently polite, respectful, and clearly proud of their school and the work they do. Pupils spoke positively about the support they receive from adults, describing how they feel respected, listened to, and safe. This powerful sense of emotional security enables them to present the best version of themselves.

Despite many pupils facing significant challenges in their personal lives, including backgrounds of deprivation, trauma, and instability, the school has established a culture rooted in mutual respect and relational trust. This has been made possible through the dedication and consistency of the Headteacher and her team, who have prioritised building quality relationships with every child and their families. As a result, pupils show genuine respect not only for staff but also for one another.

The inclusive culture of this school has impacted on the way that pupils see themselves and others and they spoke respectfully to the assessor about their own additional needs and of the diverse nature of needs in the school. They expressed how thankful they are to be at this school because the teachers know them and care for them even when they are having a “*bad day*.”

The routines and expectations of behaviour are clear. Their three simple rules Ready, Respect, Safe are visible throughout the school through signage and literature but also visible in the attitudes and values of the pupils. Where staff have identified that a pupil is finding an aspect of the school day difficult, for example lunchtime, adaptations are implemented to support during this time and to remove the barriers. Staff are trained and knowledgeable in a range of strategies to support emotional regulation and the recent introduction of Thrive approaches has further enhanced their approaches to support pupils with a range of SEMH needs.

The Headteacher and leaders have established effective systems for monitoring and approaching attendance and punctuality and they describe themselves as “*relentless in its pursuit of good attendance*.” Their highly skilled and respected Family Support Worker manages attendance daily. Strong systems are in place for responding to absence including home visits where needed.

Staff across the school are acutely aware of the influence of their own behaviour and language when supporting pupils, particularly those with more complex needs. They are mindful of their tone, body language, and responses, recognising the impact these can have on a child’s emotional regulation and self-esteem. This reflective and emotionally intelligent approach further reinforces the school’s strong culture of care, belonging, and high expectations for every pupil.

Next Steps:

- To continue to develop understanding and embed the Thrive approaches.



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Element 7 - Parents, Carers and Guardians

The assessor met with a with a broad group of parents and carers including Foster Carers and Grandparents. There was unanimous praise for the inclusive, nurturing ethos of the school. Parents described the school as having a *"warm, friendly, family feel"* where every child is accepted and treated as an individual. Some spoke emotionally about how their children had flourished since joining the school, with one Grandparent stating, *"If it wasn't for this school, my grandchildren would've been lost."*

A consistent theme throughout the discussion was the school's deep commitment to inclusion. Parents commented that staff never see additional needs or vulnerabilities as an issue or challenge and the support they provide is second to none. Some parents talked about how their children had been failed in other settings but have thrived since attending Astmoor.

One carer described how staff made simple but essential adjustments, such as providing ear defenders during music lessons for a child with sensory issues. Another praised the school's provision of therapeutic activities such as art and music therapy. They shared how support extends beyond the classroom, with access to clothes and food banks and proactive engagement with families. One parent shared how staff had helped facilitate mediation sessions and provided safeguarding support that went *"above and beyond"*.

Parents value the school's approach to communication. The Family Support Worker, Teachers and Leaders are visible and easily approachable, with regular contact through phone calls, texts, emails, and updates on the school's social media platforms. Parents said they felt listened to and informed, with several examples shared of staff reaching out quickly when children were having a difficult day. One foster carer noted, *"They always contact me straight away. Communication is excellent."* There was high praise for the breadth of enrichment opportunities, including well-organised school trips and community events such as bingo nights. Parents feel involved and welcomed, with invitations to join trips.

Throughout the conversation, parents and carers returned to one clear message: *"this school genuinely cares!"* This care is evident in the way staff interact with pupils and their families, the way they support families, and the way they make every child feel seen and valued.

Next Steps:

- To investigate and trial different approaches to engage parents to support early reading.



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Element 8 - Links with Local, Wider and Global Community

Astmoor Primary School is committed to fostering strong connections within the local, wider, and global community. The school shares its site with an adult learning centre and a nursery/pre-school. Staff actively engage with a broad network of local partners, including colleges, high schools, libraries, and community organisations, to enrich pupils' educational experiences. These partnerships create valuable opportunities for learning and development, from inter-school events like art exhibitions and sporting competitions to collaborative musical performances and community safety initiatives.

The school welcomes regular visitors from groups such as the Halton Historical Society and the Health Improvement Team who provide workshops on a variety of topics. Children frequently visit the local library, particularly around events such as World Book Day. Parents and carers are invited to join educational outings, further strengthening home-school links. Educational visits are planned to connect pupils with their heritage and expand their horizons, these include trips to Roman forts, museums, local gardens, and residential outdoor centres in Cheshire.

Globally, the school has a long-standing partnership with Mashemong Primary School in South Africa. This relationship has developed through the British Council and has resulted in reciprocal staff visits. The partnership offers pupils authentic, global perspectives and fosters empathy, cultural understanding, and friendship. An annual school-wide Friendship Award celebrates this unique connection, and it is embedded in the curriculum through a themed unit called *The Rainbow Nation*

Staff benefit from Local Authority-led training and network opportunities. The school also offers placements for trainee teaching assistants through Riverside College and works with universities to support initial teacher training. The Vice Chair of Governors is a Senior Leader in the main feeder high school; this is mutually beneficial for many reasons. Transition support is carefully managed at both ends of the school journey, ensuring smooth moves into nursery, reception, and on to high school.

Support for families is strengthened through the local knowledge and expertise of the staff who are well-informed about wider services they can signpost carers to. The school links with The Greggs Foundation to provides a breakfast club and has secured funding for essential household goods for families in crisis. The school has also benefited from successful bids to fund sensory resources and enhancing the Thrive room to support emotional wellbeing. Astmoor Primary School demonstrates a strong commitment to enriching the lives of its pupils through its many community links.

Next Steps:

- To explore options for using Information Technology to further strengthen links with their partner school in South Africa.