



Report on IQM Inclusive School Award



School Name: Impact North West Schools Ltd

School Address: Unit 1
Tower House
Tower Road
Birkenhead
CH41 1FF

Head/Principal Ms Jayne Jones

IQM Lead Ms Jayne Jones

Assessment Date 10th May 2024

Assessor Mr James Harris

Sources of Evidence:

- Self-assessment Report
- Pre-opening Ofsted Report
- Website and Policies
- Learning Walk
- Pupil Books
- Learning Environment

Meetings Held with:

- Headteacher
- Proprietor
- Local Authority Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Manager
- Local Authority Alternative Provision (AP) Manager
- Parents, Carers and Guardians
- Pupils
- Teachers and Teaching Assistants
- Leadership Team



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Overall Evaluation

Impact North West Schools Ltd (INWS) is an independent provider of education for young people aged 11 to 16 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH). These include young people who have been permanently excluded from school and also those whose SEND plans identify INWS as the education provider. INWS serves young people from the Cheshire West and Wirral Local Authority (LA) areas and it is currently full, with 12 young people in Key Stage (KS)4 and 18 in KS3. INWS opened in September 2023, had a positive Ofsted pre-opening report and is awaiting a full inspection.

INWS is exceptionally inclusive by design and the inclusive ethos permeates everything that they do. The quality of relationships between pupils and staff is impressive and the provision is transforming the life chances of the young people who attend the school. The school supports some of the most disaffected young people and disadvantaged young people in society and welcomes them with love and care. Most of the pupils at INWS have had exceptionally adverse experiences in mainstream provision and building a desire to learn and to trust educational professionals is a key part of the work of the team at INWS.

The assessment day celebrated various aspects of the school's practice, including personalised curriculum planning, robust safeguarding procedures, wide-ranging enrichment programmes, extensive pastoral support, a supportive learning environment and staff cohesion.

The Headteacher is passionate, highly committed and very focused on achieving the very best outcomes for the young people at INWS. She states that these young people deserve the very best education. This ethos is shared by the Managing Director who works in very close partnership with the Headteacher. Every member of the small, cohesive staff team demonstrated the same exceptional care for the young people in their charge. The whole team goes above and beyond in the interests of the young people and their families in providing 'wrap-around' individualised provision. This wrap-around pastoral care is a key element in the provision at INWS which begins with a panel process that is described as rigorous and positive by officers of the LA. This leads to detailed individual plans being put in place for each young person relating both to academic progress and individual wellbeing. These plans are very regularly reviewed and updated by the staff team and form part of the information transferred to mainstream provision for those students who return.

Trauma-informed practice underpins everything that INWS does; it is the 'golden thread' that ties everything together. The school community recognises that many of the young people in their care have experienced significant trauma and that this often applies to their families as well. This underpins the school's impressive work with the families of their pupils. The school has made good use of the Pivotal Pillars in informing their practice and these underpin the approach to behaviour across the school.

An absolute highlight of the visit was the meetings with individuals and groups of students, which clearly showcased the school's ethos of inclusivity and support. Students demonstrated confidence, comfort and nurture in their interactions with each other, reflecting positively on the culture created by the staff. The students spoke



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movingly and articulately about the positive relationships fostered at the school, where students feel understood and well cared for by the adults. All of the students that I spoke to had very negative experiences and perceptions of mainstream education and the transformation in their attitude and potentially to their futures was inspirational.

There is a highly child-centred approach to curriculum planning, drawing upon individual interests and supporting diverse needs. There is a significant focus on literacy, especially reading, as many students enter the school with reading ages well below their chronological age. Appropriate literacy intervention is provided and the impact is carefully tracked. The school offers a wide range of opportunities through its significant and developing enrichment programme, linked both to individual subjects and the wider needs of the pupils.

Break and lunch times were particularly significant in indicating the ethos and culture of the school, with staff actively involved in providing appropriate activities for all the pupils and informal conversations taking place between staff and individual pupils. I observed positive, mutually respectful conversations taking place between staff and pupils of a range of ages where the young people had histories of extremely negative interactions with schools and professionals. The inclusive culture of INWS is transformative for these young people's life chances.

The documentation provided by the school clearly demonstrates that inclusion and meeting individual needs are the driving forces behind provision at INWS and this is shown in the personalisation and adaptation of the curriculum for each learner in the interests of improving their life chances and opportunities.

Meetings with representatives of one of the LAs served by INWS clearly demonstrated that the provision is highly valued within the area with the relevant officers encouraging Impact North West Schools Ltd to open additional centres in the local area. It was clear that the Local Authority officers considered that INWS combines a realistic and effective analysis of pupil need with an exceptional commitment to high-quality provision. The school has had to turn down at least 50 requests for places since opening as they are at capacity.

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 Mark 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: Mr James Harris

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

Inclusion values are evident in every element of practice at INWS. Their motto “I am positive about change today” is clear in everything that they do. As their website says “INWS is an inclusive school that effectively meets the needs of all of its learners; we recognise that pupils learn best where they feel happy and strive to establish an environment where learners are supported, challenged and have the opportunity to grow”.

It is clear that the Managing Director and the Headteacher form a very strong team and share the same highly inclusive ethos. This is shared by every member of the staff team and it is highly evident in the very positive relationships that they form with the young people. As the Headteacher says, “relationships are at the heart of everything”, and as the INWS website confirms, “developing positive trusting relationships” by “ensuring every child is known” is at the heart of the school’s mission. The Headteacher spoke of the key importance of recruiting staff who can develop positive relationships with the young people at INWS.

The school plays an active role in collaboration with a wide range of external partners in the interests of each individual pupil. Leaders liaise with any external agency that they consider appropriate to support the needs of any pupil or family. INWS staff are often the lead professionals in meetings involving social workers, the Youth Justice service and other agencies. There are effective collaborations with agencies such as the Brook Advisory service, counselling services, community mentors, careers advisors and those providing information relating to police and criminal justice matters. This positive engagement with a wide range of partners is an example of the way in which the leaders of INWS seek to, “go the extra mile” to enable the best possible outcomes for their pupils and families.

There is a careful and rigorous analysis of need on the admission of each pupil with carefully planned interventions for each individual. Many pupils have exceptionally adverse impressions of mainstream schooling and education professionals and building trust and security is clearly a high priority for the staff team. Food, safety, positive relationships and an environment of respect are critical and this is embodied in the principles of ‘Ready, Respect, Safe’ that are evident throughout INWS. This is exemplified by the welcome on the door, breakfast on arrival, individual support for pupils in distress and conflict resolution; all of which were observed during this visit.

Pupils are highly supportive of the school, and comments such as “really sympathetic”, “the staff are lovely”, “he sees something in me” and “lots of attention” were common in the discussions with individual pupils; they clearly understand that they are valued as individuals by the staff at INWS.

Next Step:

- There are no significant areas of development in this element.



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Element 2 - Leadership and Management and Accountability

INWS is a new provision, (opened in September 2023) and has an inclusive, ambitious and aspirational vision which is clearly valued by parents and carers, pupils and those commissioning places from the LA.

Safeguarding is integral to the practice at INWS with an evident balance between effective supervision (for example the productive and purposeful use of break and lunch times) and respect which is founded on very positive relationships. It was clear from the moment of arrival that the safeguarding of the young people is a high priority. The physical space is well organised with appropriate monitoring and safety arrangements so that all pupils and staff are kept safe. Both the Headteacher and the Managing Director have significant safeguarding experience in educational roles.

Intelligent monitoring of progress is in place with a range of additional factors such as school moves built into the profile of each pupil. A high priority is placed on the effective tracking of small steps including behaviour and attitude, alongside the 'I can' statements for academic progress. This information is used in regular meetings of the staff team.

Staff wellbeing is a priority for INWS. The Headteacher spoke of the team being the most committed group of professionals that she had ever had the privilege to work with. Staff spoke about a formal structure of wellbeing groups with evidence of change (for example in requests for additional storage) alongside initiatives such as "Wellbeing Wednesdays" which are highly valued by pupils and staff

Significant time is given to staff for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) with investment in appropriate training from organisations such as the National College and National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN). There is an effective induction process for new staff.

There is a clear management and leadership structure in place within a small staff team. INWS benefits from the educational expertise of the Governing body, including an ex-Headteacher, and has also undertaken external reviews of provision to inform provision. Notably, INWS has a Governing body in place as well as the Proprietor Board. This provides a good level of expertise, challenge and support for the Headteacher. The Managing Director, who chairs the Proprietor Board, has a close working relationship with the Headteacher with formal meetings twice a week, and regular informal contact. There is an effective self-evaluation process in place including regular formal reports to the Boards by the Headteacher, , a regular quality assurance calendar and external reviews.

Next Step:

- There are no significant areas of development in this element.



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Element 3 - Curriculum – Structure, Pupil Engagement and Adaptation

Flexibility and adaptation are key to the curriculum at INWS. An example of this practice is that of a KS4 pupil who was motivated by an aspiration to study Business. Despite this not being part of the curriculum offer at INWS, a significant effort was made to find a way for him to take a Business course and thereby secure his next steps to college. This exemplifies a really impressive focus on the individualised next steps for each young person which are shared with pupils, staff and families. Staff are knowledgeable about the curriculum and are extremely effective in adapting it to the needs of each learner.

The curriculum is carefully considered at both KS3 and KS4. A high priority is placed upon literacy, including reading, as many pupils arrive with reading ages significantly below their chronological age. Strategies include the use of Read Write Inc. to improve phonics, the use of International Dyslexia Learning (IDL) Literacy intervention software, regular reading each day and weekly reading lessons. One pupil spoke eloquently of her love of books which has developed since coming to INWS.

There is a clear and appropriate focus on filling significant gaps in pupil knowledge and understanding, with the curriculum tailored to each individual. This provides the basis for the next steps for each individual, including reintegration into mainstream provision as appropriate. 'Exit Packs' are provided for each student who returns to mainstream provision giving detailed information about the progress of the individual. One of the officers of the LA spoke particularly positively about the quality of the information that INWS provided to the child's mainstream school.

The curriculum has strong local links, for example, pupils in Year 9 doing their Sports Leader qualification were planning an event in a local park during a lesson in the morning and then went out that afternoon to map out the route. National and international issues are raised through the 'Reactive Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE)' lesson each week which enables the discussion of current topics, as well as assemblies focused on national initiatives such as Mental Health Week.

Character development is a very strong element of all provision at INWS. All pupils were respectful, courteous and articulate and understood the 'Ready, Respect, Safe' priorities of the school. As part of the development of life skills, some pupils were involved in the practical running of the school, for example by helping to prepare lunch, whilst others have the opportunity to mentor younger pupils.

There is a very good provision of extracurricular activities within the context of the provision. Break and lunch times involve activities in the classrooms, for example, I saw a group highly engaged in a competitive game of Monopoly! Extracurricular activities take place before school, at break and lunch times, and after school. Their take-up is monitored with a leaderboard and rewards are given for engagement. This is highly valued by the pupils. Pupils are given experiences which challenge them, for example competing in an athletics competition where the other competitors were all from private or selective mainstream schools

Next Step:

- To develop further options at KS4 with a focus on creative and outdoor learning.



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

Teaching and learning at INWS is based upon relationships. The positive relationships between adults and young people lead to the pupils engaging in learning. This requires significant skill on the part of the adults and the Headteacher said that it was a high priority when recruiting staff that they are able to form positive relationships with the young people who attend INWS. This inclusive, relationship-focused approach to teaching nurtures individuals and addresses their needs, leading to significantly improved outcomes.

During my visits to lessons, it was clear that the pupils were engaged in their learning and that the teaching was challenging and adapted to their needs. For example, in an English lesson with Year 10, pupils were engaged in a structured, detailed analysis of a motivating example text in order to provide them with the framework to engage with a GCSE English Language written task. They were keen to identify hyperbole, sarcasm and other language structures. It was clear that the very positive relationships between pupils and staff lead to learners wishing to make progress, sometimes having had very significant negative experiences of learning in other settings.

Appropriate technology and resources are in place and the environment is conducive to calm, inclusive learning. The small group sizes, small rooms and individualised attention create a very effective space for learning.

Individual planning is absolutely key to the progress of each pupil and it is clear that this is carefully thought about. The staff shows considerable response to individual needs both in immediate responses, for example by taking time at the end of the lesson to resolve a dispute between 2 pupils that was hindering learning and in planned ways, for example positioning a pupil near to the door of the room because that was essential for his continued learning. Teaching Assistants are effectively deployed to support learning.

The whole team approach to meeting each individual's learning needs was extremely impressive to witness.

Next Step:

- To further develop the quality of teaching and learning overall it is important to develop a shared pedagogical language around the teaching of pupils with SEMH needs, drawing on best practice in mainstream and specialist provision nationally, so that staff have a shared language around the continued development of outstanding teaching and learning provision.



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Element 5 - Assessment

Each pupil is assessed using a range of baseline assessments as part of their induction so that the gaps in their learning can be identified and their provision carefully planned. Ongoing progress is carefully tracked with each pupil's individual progress being monitored, in terms of, "I can" statements alongside behaviour and attitude to learning. The school uses a lesson by lesson system of monitoring for attitude to learning which allows senior staff to track and identify issues. This supports daily discussions about each pupil's wellbeing and academic progress. This focused, individualised and caring approach to identifying the needs of each student and monitoring each step in their development is a strength of this provision. Individual targets relating to a pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are carefully monitored and reviewed as appropriate.

Evidence from external tests, for example, measuring reading ages, is used effectively to plan appropriate intervention, using targeted support as necessary. A central record is kept of the interventions and actions to address learning gaps is carefully recorded. This informs the differentiation and scaffolding observed in lessons and is supported by one-to-one tutoring, small group work and peer tutoring.

Parents and carers spoke about the quality of daily communication from INWS staff. There are also formal opportunities for families to speak to staff about the progress of their child.

During the assessment day, clear feedback was observed in books, such as Health and Social Care and English. Low-stakes testing and verbal feedback are very important in this setting although good pupil engagement with a formal mock examination was also observed. Teachers are well aware of the progress that pupils are making and use a range of strategies to assess their progress. It is clear that teachers are well aware of the progress that pupils are making and use a range of strategies to assess their progress. Methods of teaching and assessment are effectively modified for this setting so that pupil learning is well supported.

The school seeks to empower young people to take the next steps in their learning by creating an environment where effort and perseverance have an impact. This is a key part of their inclusive ethos and transforms the pupils' approach to their learning. During the assessment day it was clear from conversations with pupils that they are very aware that they are learning; for many of them, this is the first time that they feel that they are making progress. Many of them spoke movingly and eloquently about their desire to learn and how they feel that they are making steps towards their goals. The pupils were all able to articulate their next steps and their aspirations, rooted in good career guidance and strong relationships with staff. For example, pupils that I spoke to had aspirations that included being a member of an airline cabin crew, a chef, an electrician and a photographer. They were clear about their next steps to reach those goals.

Next Step:

- There are no significant areas of development in this element.



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Element 6 - Behaviour, Attitudes to Learning and Personal Development

This is a very impressive element of inclusive practice at INWS and it underpins all the provision at the school. Trauma-informed practice is the thread that runs through everything that INWS does and their relational approach is highly evident in everything that was observed. As members of staff said, if the first steps of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are met then young people will be in a place to learn.

INWS is a very calm, well-ordered and relaxed environment. Inclusion, acceptance of each other and positive relationships underpin everything that is done and it was impressive to observe. Clear boundaries and systems are in place to provide support for those who are upset or distressed. During the assessment day I witnessed examples of individual support being provided as needed for pupils who were not in a place to learn at that point. The "Ready, Respectful, Safe" principles underpin all the policies and procedures that are in place and these principles are clearly understood by pupils and staff.

Building character is one of the most important aspects of the education of INWS and it was inspiring to hear from the young people about their journeys through the education system and how their experience at INWS was giving them a positive view of the future. They were consistently eloquent and assured in their interaction with adults and able to articulate the difference that INWS was making in their lives. It was very moving to hear from a pupil who had a very difficult experience in a mainstream school speaking about how, "the staff are lovely", talking about how one of the teachers, "sees something in me" and how the lessons are, "formed to my type of learning". Another student talked about the quality of the relationships, how teachers know how to work with each of the young people and how there is a really positive environment in the school. During the assessment day, I witnessed numerous examples of this in practice with exceptionally positive interactions being encouraged and modelled by the staff. All the students were able to articulate their aspirations for the future.

Many of the pupils who come to INWS have a history of very low attendance at mainstream schools. Attendance monitoring is therefore based on moving pupils from their starting point. Their attendance is very carefully monitored and there is a wide range of interventions employed to improve their attendance at INWS. These include an outreach service, early morning text messages, pickups, rewards, positive messages and one-to-one support. There are clear health and safety policies around fixed term suspensions and there have been no permanent exclusions.

It is hard to put into words the effect that the trauma-informed practice that I witnessed has on the pupils at INWS; it is transforming the life chances for these young people and is a significant strength of the school.

Next Step:

- INWS staff are undertaking training in THRIVE as part of the continuous development of provision.



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Element 7 - Parents, Carers and Guardians

During the assessment day it was notable that parents, carers and guardians spoke passionately and positively about the provision at INWS. For many of them, the contrast between the relationship that they have with the staff at the school was a marked contrast with their experience of mainstream provision. They were delighted that their children were happy at school and wanting to come to school, perhaps for the first time in many years.

Parents, carers, and guardians are exceptionally positive about INWS and the effect that it has on their children's education and wellbeing. The parents that I spoke to said:

- "He is saying that he wants to learn".
- "They keep the children engaged and really care about them"
- "You need more like this"
- "Amazing, he was struggling in the mainstream now he is excelling at everything"
- "Able to learn, confident"
- "Keep doing what you are doing - it's ace!"

Parents, carers and guardians especially valued the quality of communication and relationships. It was clear that there were strong relationships between staff and families and that this would provide a firm basis for the necessarily challenging conversations that would sometimes occur.

The school is flexible about its means of communication and communicates with each family each day about progress. There are opportunities for parents and carers to come into INWS to discuss their child's progress regularly through parent consultation days.

On the assessment day, a parent spoke about how his elder child would have been far more successful in education had they had the opportunity to attend provision such as INWS. As he said, "you need more like this". This sense of gratitude to the school was echoed by all the parents that I spoke with. Many of the young people at INWS have previously been out of education for a considerable period or attending mainstream provision for a very limited time each week, and several parents commented on the way in which the school has enabled the child to settle in quickly and improve their attendance.

Strong mechanisms for family support exist as appropriate, including the provision of Christmas presents, providing food parcels as needed and signposting to external agencies. Many families with young people at INWS have significantly negative perceptions of educational and other professionals and building trust is a significant strength of the school's work.

Next Step:

- There are no significant areas of development in this element.



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Element 8 - Links with Local, Wider and Global Community

Trips are a planned and strong element in the context of this provision. It is very important to the staff team at INWS that their pupils are given opportunities to enrich and enhance their lives. Subject links are carefully planned. A visit to the Tate was organised when a group was studying Pop Art. There are also trips which are aimed at giving pupils life experiences, for example, a trip to a football match. Assemblies and the weekly 'Reactive PSHE' lessons raise awareness of national and global community issues. There have been visits from various organisations such as the Royal Navy and a local university. Charity work is also undertaken by pupils to raise funds for a local children's hospice to further raise awareness of their community.

Many pupils travel a considerable distance to attend INWS and so the local community is also considered as that within which the pupil lives. The school signposts families to a wide range of agencies and has provided food parcels and Christmas presents for families to support families in need. Each pupil of a suitable age is given the opportunity to attend a suitable work experience individually tailored to their needs. The school works very closely with businesses local to the pupil's home. This is important, for example, when seeking appropriate individualised work experience provision.

The school only opened in September 2023 and it is very actively seeking links with other providers locally and nationally in order to forge strong partnerships. Links are being established with an Ofsted 'Outstanding' SEMH provision in Manchester in order to benchmark best practice. INWS is a provider of support for others, with the Headteacher providing support for mainstream primary schools to improve provision for students with SEMH issues in mainstream schools.

The officers of the LA were very positive about the provision and spoke about encouraging the Proprietor to open further such provisions in the local area. They were particularly complimentary of the thorough panel process on admission, the open and honest discussions about each pupil and the willingness to give young people a chance. They considered that staff at INWS, "walk the walk". From my visit I strongly support that view.

The staff and leaders at INWS liaise closely with a wide range of agencies in order to ensure the best possible provision for their pupils. These partnerships support the wider development of the young people. Examples include collaboration with the Birkenhead Park Ranger project, Creating Communities, and the Cells project. There are collaborative links with higher education institutions including Edge Hill, Keele and Chester Universities.

Next Step:

- INWS is actively seeking to develop links with other providers to benchmark best practice.