



Report on IQM Inclusive School Award



School Name: Chatham Place Nursery School

School Address: 139 Earle Road, Picton,
Liverpool
Merseyside
L7 6HE

Head/Principal Ms Andrea Connearn

IQM Lead Ms Francesca Turner

Assessment Date 10th June 2025

Assessor Mr David Clay

Sources of Evidence:

- IQM Self Evaluation Report (SER)
- Ofsted report
- Website
- Curriculum overview
- Displays
- Learning environments
- Visit to Forest School
- Learning Walks
- Letters of support from wider services
- Evidence written by SENCo

Meetings Held with:

- Executive Headteacher
- SENDCo
- Parent from Mainstream
- Parent from Resource Hub
- Staff (Admin, Teachers, Nursery Practitioners)



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- Children's Centre Leader
- Students on Placement at the Nursery
- OSMEE Practitioner
- Governors



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Overall Evaluation

Chatham Nursery School is a Local Authority Maintained Nursery School located in the Smithdown Road area of Liverpool. The Nursery School offers provision for 60 full-time students, including some paid places and 30-hours funded places for working parents and carers. There are also 20 full-time places available for students aged 2 to 3 years. Since September 2024, the setting has also offered 12 part-time Resourced Places funded by the Local Authority for students with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The community is diverse, with 19 different languages spoken by students within the provision, creating a vibrant and enthusiastic learning environment and has a larger than average number of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The setting was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in recognition of the high expectations staff hold for their students, a standard that was reflected throughout this visit.

Chatham Nursery School is based in a community building that also serves as a hub for local health and children's services, including a Children's Centre, which is part of the school's Federation. The setting serves the Smithdown Road area, which continues to evolve due to various ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic influences. According to the leadership team, "a substantial number of families are considered vulnerable or in need." The starting points for most students when they join the setting are below age-related expectations. Given the high levels of need both within the setting and the wider community, Chatham Nursery School provides a warm, welcoming, and safe sanctuary through its inclusive approaches. The school's core value is expressed through the mnemonic 'FAMILY', which serves as a point of pride and unity for the communities it serves.

Chatham Nursery School exemplifies the true essence of inclusion, with inclusive practice placed firmly at the centre of its ethos. One member of staff described the school as "being there for anyone, treating everyone the same, and providing the love and help that they need." Staff consistently spoke about the importance of positive relationships with the families they support. These strong relationships were evident between staff and students, and the deep level of care was reflected in the attitudes of the students, who show gratitude and mutual support.

Leaders began the IQM assessment day by speaking about the school's mission statement, centred around the concept of being family. They emphasised that both staff and students are part of this inclusive group. One parent described the setting as "incredible," reflecting that they couldn't have coped without the support of the whole Chatham family. Staff take pride in maintaining high standards and consistently prioritise the students' needs above all else. There is a culture of reflection and forward-thinking, with a constant drive to enhance practice.

The Executive Headteacher radiates calm and passion, and this is clearly mirrored in the federation's provision. Her dedication extends beyond her own schools; she is committed to ensuring that all students across Liverpool receive the high-quality education they deserve. Her calm, solution-focused approach was described by staff as inspirational. Her tireless efforts to create positive change and support vulnerable



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communities stand as a testament to her values. She leads by example, creating an environment where staff are eager to grow and continuously improve. High standards are reflected in the environment, staff conduct, and student attitudes.

The recently appointed Head of School has continued to build upon the school's longstanding commitment to community support. Her contributions to the learning environment have further strengthened the provision, creating a space where students feel comfortable, valued, and supported. The relationship between the Head of School and the students is a clear demonstration of the care and dedication shown by the team.

Staff across the Nursery School embody a culture of empowerment and positivity. There is a shared dedication to high standards, professionalism, and inclusive practice. This collective pride is evident in all interactions with students and their families. Staff are valued and encouraged to contribute meaningfully, making the setting an exceptional place for both students and adults alike. Staff spoke happily of the trust that is put in them by the leadership and the ways that they are enabled to change and refine practice as long as staff are reflective and evaluate and learn from these changes. Nobody in this practice is micromanaged.

The school's commitment to supporting parents and carers goes beyond simple engagement; it is a transformative partnership that contributes meaningfully to their lives. Through inclusive education and holistic support, the setting fosters an environment where school and families work hand-in-hand to ensure the best outcomes for students' personal development. The school also works closely with a wide range of educational and health services and the adjoining Children's Centre to signpost and support parents wherever possible.

Collaboration with external agencies is another key strength. External practitioners working with the school speak very positively about the setting's inclusive and cooperative approach. One external agency noted in a letter that they "wished all nurseries had a provision like this." These partnerships have enriched the educational experience and opened opportunities for innovative collaborative working.

The school is committed to laying strong foundations for lifelong learning. Its curriculum is constantly evolving to ensure it fully supports all students in achieving a positive start to their education. The Governors fully endorse the setting's inclusive ethos. They bring a wide range of skills and expertise that actively contribute to enhancing inclusive practice across the school.

For the IQM Assessment, both the Executive Headteacher and the Head of School provided comprehensive and wide-ranging evidence to support the process. I was welcomed into the setting with warmth and observed a deeply embedded culture of reflection and self-evaluation. Staff demonstrated an open and positive approach to continuous improvement, ensuring the provision remains dynamic and responsive.

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.



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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 David Clay

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. McCann".

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Joe McCann MBA NPQH
CEO Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd



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Element 1 - The Inclusion Values of the School

One member of staff reflected on what characterises Chatham Nursery School, stating that “every person is welcomed and given the same nurture and help they need.” The message from all stakeholders is clear: everyone is welcome. Chatham offers help and support to all its students and their families. Staff are solution-focused and work to ensure that students and their families feel they are a valued part of the community. A strong sense of belonging is seen as essential. One parent shared their experience of visiting eight other provisions—each of which said they could not meet their child’s complex needs—before finding Chatham, which was “willing to try and find a solution.” She reflected that it was the first time she had found a team who “really understood her [daughter].” Staff consistently go above and beyond to find solutions, ensuring that every student can access a high-quality education.

Students’ lives and experiences outside of nursery are reflected throughout the classroom environments. Family photographs and displays highlight the languages spoken at home, and diverse books and resources empower students to learn about their own cultures as well as those of others. Individual identities are celebrated, and inclusive values are embedded in the curriculum. Students are taught to value differences, and the care and kindness they show each other during their time in provision is exemplary.

The Nursery School and Childcare Centre support a significant number of students with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs). The setting acts as a strong advocate for students and their families, especially recognising that many parents and carers may be unfamiliar with the complexities of the education system. Staff express a deep belief that all students deserve access to the best education possible.

There is a strong awareness among staff of the challenges students face and a genuine commitment to understanding each student as an individual. Every student receives the same level of love and affection, reinforcing the importance of relationships and emotional nurture. The setting continues to evolve in response to the changing backgrounds of the local community, demonstrating a sustained willingness to understand and meet the cultural and individual needs of each family.

Nurture is at the heart of the setting’s values—not only for students and families but also for staff. Leaders prioritise staff wellbeing and model high standards of care and professionalism. All staff are given dedicated “file time” during the working week to manage administrative tasks, supporting their workload and reducing pressure.

The core value of the setting is ‘family’—a principle that applies equally to students, their families, and staff. Staff describe a culture of mutual support, going above and beyond for one another and for the families they serve. This sense of belonging, care, and unity defines the inclusive ethos at the heart of Chatham Nursery School.

Alongside its journey to becoming an Inclusion Quality Mark school, Chatham Nursery is seeking to become a “School of Sanctuary” that reflects its trauma informed, nurturing approach and support that it provides for the complex needs of its community.



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Next Steps:

- To explore opportunities for sharing best practice with similar provisions, focusing on how they can adopt and implement a solution-focused approach to supporting their students.



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Element 2 - Leadership and Management and Accountability

The discussion with Governors centred on the setting's unwavering commitment to inclusion and the dedication of the Executive Headteacher in meeting the diverse needs of the community it serves. The experienced and knowledgeable Governing Board demonstrated both a passion for the school and a deep understanding of the local context, enabling them to provide both challenge and support. The Board includes professionals such as Deputy Headteachers and SENCos from other local schools, bringing a wealth of skill and expertise. One Governor, in particular, has supported this community for over 50 years, continuing to offer invaluable experience, insight, and a deep passion and commitment to ensuring the highest quality of support for students and their families.

Governors strongly emphasised the importance of inclusion, acknowledging the setting's role as a vital community hub that helps to break down barriers. They praised the Executive Headteacher's commitment to fostering unity within the community, describing the school as a place that brings people together. Her relentless efforts to promote inclusivity and provide students with the best possible start were widely recognised. The Headteacher was also acknowledged for leading by example and creating a nurturing culture that extends throughout the entire school. Governors noted how they regularly check in on the Headteacher's wellbeing and offer peer support—evidence of a collaborative and caring leadership structure. It was clear that the Governing Board takes immense pride in the work being carried out across the federation.

Both the Executive Headteacher and the Head of School spoke passionately about distributed leadership and empowering their teams to make decisions in the best interests of students. This empowerment is guided by a clear vision and high expectations for all. These values are consistently reflected throughout the school, with each area demonstrating the same high standards—welcoming, well-presented, homely spaces that show the deep respect staff have for their learning environment. The thoughtful design of each space—particularly the provision for children in receipt of an EHCP with complex SEND needs, 'The Nest'—clearly reflects the specific needs of the students, while maintaining a unified and nurturing atmosphere throughout the provision.

Conversations with staff revealed a genuine sense of joy and satisfaction in working at Chatham Nursery School. Staff described a strong sense of camaraderie and affection for their workplace, referring to it as a nurturing environment where they are supported in stepping outside their comfort zones and learning from one another. They repeatedly described the school as both "welcoming" and "caring," highlighting the mutual support extended to both students and colleagues.

Staff shared how they regularly check in on each other's mental health at the beginning and end of the day, demonstrating a deep culture of wellbeing and compassion. They expressed sincere appreciation for how the Head of School listens carefully to their concerns and personal needs, ensuring they feel heard and supported. Overall, staff consistently described Chatham Nursery School as "one big family"—a place where they genuinely enjoy coming to work each day.



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Next Steps:

- To continue leveraging the team's expertise to develop systems that support students in understanding their emotional development—particularly within a context that includes a significant number of students with English as an Additional Language (EAL).



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Element 3 - Curriculum – Structure, Pupil Engagement and Adaption

Chatham Nursery School is continually evolving its curriculum to ensure it is both exciting and engaging, with careful mapping to meet the developmental needs of all students. This thoughtfully planned curriculum fosters an environment where classrooms are consistently filled with joy, enthusiasm, and meaningful interactions among students. Recent curriculum developments have been ambitious, ensuring that the foundational stages of learning are robust, well-structured, and aspirational. By adapting research-based schemes, the setting effectively meets the diverse needs of its students.

Recognising that no two cohorts are the same, the school designs its provision around the specific needs of each group. Staff adapt their planning to suit each new cohort, allowing it to evolve throughout the academic year in response to ongoing observations and assessments. This flexible approach ensures that provision remains relevant, inclusive, and dynamic.

The setting places a strong emphasis on creating an inclusive curriculum that reflects and celebrates the diversity of its students. Given the high proportion of students who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL), language development is a key priority. Fostering a love of reading is central to the school's ethos, and it was heartening to see staff sharing stories with students, smiling and engaging together during continuous provision. Chatham also runs a family book club twice a year for eight weeks after school, providing further opportunities for language enrichment and family involvement. Students who are new to the country have shown rapid language acquisition in this supportive, language-rich environment.

To further support language development, the setting uses WELLCOMM assessments to track and guide progress. Strong partnerships with the Speech and Language Therapy team ensure that specialist support is readily available. Staff feel heard and well-supported when working with students who have more complex communication needs. Classroom environments promote repetition and overlearning, embedding key language skills in a natural and meaningful way through everyday interactions.

Parental involvement is highly valued as a vital component of the inclusive curriculum. Families are regularly invited to contribute to their child's learning journey, regardless of their individual needs. Staff routinely gather feedback from parents and carers about their aspirations for their students, as well as students' interests and experiences outside of school. This insight directly informs curriculum planning, making learning more relevant and meaningful.

The curriculum also incorporates national and international events, using them as opportunities to invite families into the setting and celebrate learning together. These shared experiences strengthen the partnership between home and school and provide a broader cultural context for learning.

Learning is further enriched through real-world experiences and connections with the wider community. Students take part in visits to parks, nursing homes, and local spaces, and have even welcomed a visiting farm to the school. These experiences generate



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excitement and deepen understanding, as reflected in the students' animated conversations about them.

Next Steps:

- To carefully map out language progression across each of the seven areas of the curriculum, ensuring a clear developmental sequence as students move through nursery. This should include opportunities for repetition and revisiting key vocabulary to support language retention and depth of understanding.



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

The effectiveness of teaching and learning in the Early Years is a critical element in supporting the development and growth of young students. It not only shapes their foundational knowledge but also lays the groundwork for a successful educational journey. It was a pleasure to observe high-quality teaching at Chatham Nursery School, where staff consistently captured the imaginations of young learners and inspired a love of learning from the earliest stages.

The physical environment is carefully designed to meet the diverse needs of all students, ensuring it is inclusive, welcoming, and conducive to learning. Each area of the setting is characterised by calmness and thoughtfulness, with a sense of care and homeliness evident throughout. In spaces such as "The Nest," where students with more complex needs access support, the environment has been deliberately simplified. Resources are selected with care to minimise overstimulation while maintaining the same consistent, calm atmosphere found throughout the provision. The outdoor area reflects the creativity and resourcefulness of staff in maximising the use of available space to meet student needs effectively.

Staff were observed skilfully using targeted tools and strategies to support speech and language development, particularly for students with more complex needs. Their approach was sensitive, purposeful, and inclusive. Children with SEND accessed high-quality intervention through OSMEET but were then supported to reengage with their class and seamlessly resumed learning. Attention Autism Bucket sessions were also used skilfully by TAs to support students with additional needs.

Throughout the observation, students were gently and confidently led into adult-directed learning experiences. Knowledgeable, experienced practitioners worked effectively in small groups, supporting engagement, and learning for all. The high quality of relationships between staff and students was clearly evident, with interactions marked by warmth, respect, and attentiveness. Within the provision, interactions supported learning, but also supported the children to develop their relationships with each other. Staff clearly knew all of the pupils well and provided the support that they needed at the right time.

Chatham Nursery School serves a richly diverse student population, fostering an inclusive environment where students from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds learn together. This diversity not only enhances social development but also prepares students for life in a globalised world. During the IQM assessment learning walk, students in the three-year-old provision were observed caring for newly arrived caterpillars—an experience that engaged them in learning about responsibility, empathy, and nature.

A range of communication tools—such as staff lanyards and visual communication boards—were used to support clear and accessible interaction between staff and students. These tools are particularly effective in enhancing language acquisition and comprehension across the setting.



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Learning displays celebrate the rich diversity of the community, with students proudly sharing and engaging with family photographs brought in from home. This fosters a strong sense of identity and belonging. Students were also observed leading their own learning with a high level of independence. They demonstrated creativity, resilience, and resourcefulness as they explored and made use of the learning environment. The freedom to take appropriate risks and make choices clearly supports their confidence and engagement.

Next Steps:

- To ensure that teaching explicitly supports the development of positive learning behaviours, enabling all students to be fully supported in their engagement, independence, and self-regulation and equipped for the expectations of school.



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Element 5 – Assessment

Assessment at Chatham Nursery School is holistic, child-centred, and grounded in the belief that learning should be meaningful, play-based, and responsive. Practitioners capture ongoing learning through the Tapestry platform, using both incidental observations and milestone reviews (e.g., birthday and half-birthday assessments). These assessments help reflect on progress, identify personalised next steps, and inform parents on how they can support learning at home.

Termly tracking across all areas of the EYFS framework informs structured pupil progress meetings. These meetings allow staff to analyse learning styles, strengths, barriers to progress, and adapt planning accordingly. For some students, personalised play plans are used to break down developmental targets into smaller, achievable steps, with regular review.

The WELLCOMM screening tool is used termly to assess communication and language development. Results from these screenings inform the planning of small group language interventions. The setting's strong partnership with the Speech and Language Therapy team ensures timely specialist support and empowers practitioners to feel confident when supporting complex profiles.

Within The Nest, objectives are carefully broken into manageable steps, making progress visible and meaningful. Intensive Interaction assessments are also used to assess engagement levels, helping staff design suitable learning activities that support student interaction and participation.

Assessment at Chatham is dynamic and responsive. Staff readily adjust planning to address emerging gaps—for example, tailoring activities for students who may not yet know colour names. This flexibility is supported by the staff's deep knowledge of their students and their sensitive, personalised approach to scaffolding progress from each student's starting point.

A culture of positive learning is evident, where mistake-making is seen as part of the learning journey. Staff model this openly, promoting resilience, emotional development, and the confidence to take educational risks.

Chatham Nursery School's approach to assessment is firmly rooted in inclusivity. Each student is recognised and supported through reflective practice, adaptive curriculum planning, and strong, collaborative partnerships with families.

Next Steps:

- To further enhance parental engagement with the Tapestry platform, with a particular focus on reaching families who are currently less engaged or harder to reach.



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Element 6 - Behaviour, Attitudes to Learning and Personal Development

At Chatham Nursery School, the development of students' personal, social, and emotional wellbeing is a key priority. The setting is deeply committed to creating a kind, caring, and inclusive learning environment where all behaviour is understood as a form of communication. This belief underpins every interaction, supporting positive behaviour and the formation of secure, respectful relationships.

The school's Key Person System plays a vital role in fostering attachment and emotional security. Each student is matched with a key adult after a settling-in period, ensuring relationships are built naturally and authentically. These relationships provide emotional stability and continuity of care across routines, including toileting, dressing, and transitions.

The environment is carefully designed to support emotional wellbeing and promote calmness. Inspired by the idea of being FAMILY, with rooms feature natural tones, soft furnishings, and thoughtfully organised learning areas. Calm corners, sensory spaces, and access to outdoor space support students in regulating emotions and accessing learning successfully.

Chatham's core values—FAMILY (Friendship, All are welcome, Make each day a chance to grow, I am unique, Let's do our best, You matter)—are central to behaviour and personal development. These values are embedded into planning and consistently referred to during routines and interactions, helping students develop empathy, resilience, and self-belief. Inclusivity and emotional intelligence are nurtured through rich learning experiences.

Intensive Interaction strategies are embedded across the provision to support students with complex communication needs. This helps students express wants and needs, while building connection and self-worth.

Behavioural challenges are approached supportively, with early identification of needs and partnership working with families and external agencies. Aspirations are actively nurtured through an enriched curriculum that broadens students' experiences and cultural capital. Visits to farms, parks, retirement homes, and participation in multicultural celebrations give students the chance to develop confidence, curiosity, and a wider understanding of the world around them.

Next Steps:

- Explore the introduction of supervised teeth brushing across the provision to align with local mainstream feeder schools.
- Investigate and develop self-regulation strategies that are accessible for students with emerging language skills, including further implementation and adaptation of Emotion Coaching approaches.



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Element 7 - Parents, Carers and Guardians

When speaking with parents and carers, it was moving to hear how deeply they value the role that Chatham Nursery School has played in their lives. One parent described the setting as essential, saying, “I couldn’t do it without them.” Another reflected that it was the “first time since her daughter’s diagnosis that she had found people who truly understood her.”

Families spoke positively about the progress their children have made since starting at Chatham. They consistently highlighted the school's solution-focused attitude and its willingness to support students with complex needs. One parent shared how she had previously visited eight nursery and specialist settings, all of which said they could not meet her child’s needs. In contrast, Chatham was “willing to try”—a defining moment that set the tone for a trusting and respectful partnership.

Parents and carers feel heard, respected, and genuinely supported by staff. They described a strong sense of working in true partnership with the school. One parent commented on the open communication, noting that staff shared in both the “highs and lows” of parenting. Many parents were particularly appreciative of the office staff, referring to them as a “friendly face and a shoulder to cry on.”

Support is provided beyond the classroom—parents are guided through SEND identification and referral processes, helped with school admission and funding applications, and signposted to appropriate services through the school’s partnership with the on-site Children’s Centre.

All parents and carers interviewed said they would wholeheartedly recommend Chatham to others—and often do. Both current and former families expressed deep gratitude for the holistic, community-wide support the setting offers.

Communication between the school and families is a clear strength. Staff prioritise effective handovers at the end of the day and ensure that families are informed of progress, particularly where a child is supported by a Play Plan. Parents are regularly invited into the setting for events and updates, reinforcing their role as active participants in their child’s early education.

The school encourages families to engage with the Tapestry platform, using it to share achievements, learning moments, and next steps. Open lines of communication ensure that parents remain informed and involved in their child’s development.

Next Steps:

- To continue supporting families who face challenges accessing Tapestry, exploring alternative methods of sharing information in a way that meets their needs.



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Element 8 - Links with Local, Wider and Global Community

Chatham Nursery School demonstrates a deep understanding of the importance of community engagement and is fully committed to building strong, meaningful relationships with external partners and the wider community. Staff work actively to ensure students are provided with rich opportunities to be part of and contribute to the local area, while also developing awareness of wider and global communities.

The school maintains an impactful relationship with a local retirement home, where students and staff engage in intergenerational visits. These interactions help foster empathy, confidence, and social understanding in young learners while supporting wellbeing in older adults.

Governors are actively engaged in discussions around the challenges of securing funding and maintaining the school's inclusive ethos while supporting the broader community. They emphasised their commitment to the needs of both local children and the wider Liverpool City context.

The nursery celebrates and embraces cultural diversity through intentional and visible actions. Family photographs representing the diverse backgrounds of students are prominently displayed, promoting identity and belonging. One staff member reflected on how the team is continually responsive to the changing dynamics of the school community, adapting provision to reflect the cultures and experiences of all families. The inclusion of a multicultural home corner, featuring packaging from around the world, is just one example of how Chatham creates an inclusive, representative, and celebratory environment.

Situated within Picton Neighbourhood Medical Centre, Chatham is uniquely placed to collaborate with a wide range of community services, including GPs, dental and pharmacy services, district nurses, and Picton Children's Centre. As part of a federation with Picton and Kensington Children's Centres and St Hugh's Primary School, Chatham is able to signpost families to a broad spectrum of support, from healthcare to English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes.

The Executive Headteacher also supports early years practice citywide through active involvement in Liverpool Primary Heads Association steering groups, Schools Forum, and Family Hub collaboratives, as well as contributing to the Dingle/Granby/Toxteth collaborative. The school works closely with School Improvement Liverpool (SIL) to share best practice and support local PVI's and other settings, particularly in the areas of EAL and inclusion. The nursery also works closely with Liverpool Hope University and Edge Hill University.

Staff at Chatham make use of local and global resources to enrich the curriculum, particularly within 'Understanding the World'. Trips to parks, farms, museums, and residential homes are regularly organised, and families are invited to join. Events such as Refugee Week and multicultural celebrations are used to extend students' awareness of the world and promote social responsibility. Fundraising events (such as for Asylum Link Merseyside) reflect a commitment to social justice and community engagement.



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Chatham is currently working toward School of Sanctuary status, and this journey has included rich discussions and activities about what 'home' looks like for different people across the globe.

Next Steps:

- Embed the Year 5 reading buddy programme in collaboration with St Hugh's Catholic Primary School, pairing preschool students with older pupils to support early literacy, communication, and personal development.
- Build on practice and invite parents and carers into school to share and celebrate their cultural traditions and practices, strengthening home-school links and enriching learning experiences.