

Inspection of an outstanding school: Dorking Nursery School

West Street, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1BY

Inspection date:

4 November 2021

Outcome

Dorking Nursery School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children adore coming to this vibrant and nurturing nursery school. They blossom, confident in the warm, caring and consistent approach from adults. From construction to painting to enjoying a book, children relish the wealth of enticing and often captivating things for them to do, both inside and out.

Adults want the very best for every child. They carefully create and choose activities to help children develop the full range of knowledge and skills they need to be ready for their next schools. For children at this school, learning is unpressured and fun.

It does not matter how much or how little children already know and can do when they start. Adults take great care to get to know each child thoroughly to make sure they can be fully included in what the nursery has to offer. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive. Like others, they benefit from the close partnerships the school builds with parents and carers.

Children learn exceptionally well how to play nicely and get along with others. Central to this positive and safe atmosphere is the importance attached to helping children communicate their wants and needs. Any unkind behaviour between children is dealt with effectively.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are crystal clear about what the school aims to achieve. Over time, they have developed a close-knit team of adults who are knowledgeable about child development and passionate about making these early school days the best they can be.

Promoting children's physical, personal, social and emotional development, as well as their communication skills, is central to the school's excellent work. The meticulously designed strategies throughout the environment help children realise the value of print

and images in helping to make sense of the world. Children yet unable to use words to communicate are helped to express themselves using signs and/or symbols.

Every child is welcome. The school works closely with parents of children with SEND in the specialist and mainstream provisions. Children's individual needs are carefully planned for and met by well-trained staff. Adults are vigilant in spotting possible unidentified SEND and leaders are proactive in engaging other professionals for specialist assessments and support.

Daily, the core team of adults make careful choices about the activities that would be best suited for children to promote their development. Staff do not lose sight of important long-term goals for children's learning and check how well they are on track to meet these. When observations show that children do not appear to be making the progress that they might, no time is wasted in exploring why this might be and in giving them extra help.

The nursery is packed full of varied, interesting and exciting activities. Adults pay close attention to children's own interests but introduce them to new opportunities as well. Staff are very clear about what they want the children to learn through each activity. They skilfully guide and support the children to this learning as they play.

Throughout, children delight in the rich range of challenges and opportunities. They show a real energy and enthusiasm for fast-moving pursuits, such as riding tricycles. Alternatively, they show great focus and attention. For example, they carefully pour water into elaborate plumbing, or gently administer treatment to sick animals in the vet's role-play area.

In the popular book area, a love of books and stories is promoted long before children can read. Excellent adult role models make sure that children from a young age learn how to handle and respect books, as well as discover the joy of sharing a book with others.

Leaders never stop thinking about what they can do to make the school even better. They keep up to date with developments in early years education and combine this knowledge with their expertise and instinct to keep the school improving. Staff appreciate and praise leaders' efforts to ensure that workloads are manageable. Like children, staff are well cared for.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding culture is very strong. Leaders will not give up if a child or family is in need and not receiving the necessary support. They do not shy away from challenging other agencies and professionals when a child might be at risk. This unshakeable determination can lead to critical action to protect vulnerable children. Another striking feature of the school's work to keep children safe is the close relationship leaders foster with other schools attended by elder siblings. This allows them to build a complete picture of risk factors. Leaders diligently keep thorough records of all safeguarding matters.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in October 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	124912
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10200001
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andy Whitehouse
Headteacher	Donna Harwood-Duffy
Website	www.dorkingnurseryschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	14 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is organised into two mainstream nursery classes, one for younger children aged two to three, and the other for children aged three and over.
- The school also has a specially resourced provision for children with SEND. It caters for up to 11 children aged three to five with varying and complex additional needs often including autism spectrum disorder. Admissions to this provision are managed by the local authority.
- The headteacher and governing body are also responsible for the running of the nearby Mole Valley Family Centre and Chertsey Nursery School.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders, staff and children. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors, and spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone. An inspector had informal conversations with parents.
- To understand the quality of education provided by the school, the inspection team examined certain aspects of the early years foundation stage curriculum in detail (deep dives). This inspection included deep dives in the specific areas of literacy and mathematics, and the prime area of physical development. To explore these aspects, inspectors looked at curriculum documents. They also spoke with leaders, teachers and other adults. Inspectors observed the nursery in action, including watching activities and listening to interactions between adults and children. The team also looked at what children created and produced through their various activities.
- Inspectors also discussed and observed the school's approach to promoting communication and language as well as children's personal, social and emotional development.
- The inspection team took account of the views expressed in 23 returns to the Ofsted Parent View survey, as well as 38 confidential questionnaire responses from staff.
- Inspectors also scrutinised the school's arrangements for safeguarding. They explored adults' knowledge and understanding of safeguarding, reviewed important records and checked procedures for vetting the suitability of adults.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gareth Flemington

Her Majesty's Inspector

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