

Inspection of a good school: Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre

Hazel Avenue, Guildford, Surrey GU1 1NR
York Road, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4DU

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2021

Outcome

Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

'A great nursery school. Experienced, kind and empathetic teachers and other staff who have my child's best interests at heart.' This quote from a parent captures perfectly what Guildford Nursery School is about.

Every child has a special member of staff or key person who offers the emotional security young children need to thrive at nursery. They are there to welcome the child with a smile as they arrive, making sure they are happy, settled and ready for the day's activities. On occasions when a child is feeling out of sorts, their key person comforts them and helps them to try and understand their feelings. Parents and carers really appreciate the messages home to reassure them that all is well.

Children love the range of activities on offer inside and outside on both sites. They think that they are choosing what to play and do, but behind the scenes adults are carefully planning activities which nurture children's learning and development. There is a constant hum of purposeful chatter as staff talk with children to extend their thinking and vocabulary. Staff create a calm and caring environment, helping children to understand their emotions and how their actions might make others feel.

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

Leaders have created a curriculum that is ambitious for children who start their education here. Many join at a developmental level below what is typical for their age, but leaders ensure that is not a barrier to future success.

Leaders' commitment to high-quality communication and language is evident throughout the nursery. Staff are constantly engaged in 'serve and return' conversations with children, modelling language, adding to the words they know and understand, and encouraging them to respond to questions and prompts. All children benefit, but

particularly the youngest, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or who do not speak English as their first language.

Through their talk with children, staff skilfully create a positive atmosphere. They teach children to take responsibility and think of others. Where, occasionally, a child finds that difficult, they are well supported to keep everyone safe. Children are taught to look after themselves in a range of ways, from using tools safely to climbing trees to understanding that their body belongs to them. Leaders draw on the nursery's diverse community to help children learn about the lives of others in a meaningful way.

Stories and rhymes feature highly in nursery life, with a strong focus on developing a love of books that will stand children in good stead for the future. Much thought goes into storytelling. Staff teach children the key words they need to know and understand in advance. They revisit core books so that children are familiar with the stories. Opportunities for children to learn the language and rhythm of well-known songs and rhymes prepare them well for learning phonics skills later.

Provision for children with SEND is high quality. Often their needs are known before they arrive. Very precise checks on entry highlight others who may have additional needs, so that a close eye can be kept on them. The inclusion leader draws on her own expertise and strong links with other professionals to pin down exactly what a child's needs are and adapt provision effectively sooner rather than later.

Leaders have created a strong staff team who enjoy coming to nursery as much as the children. Staff have huge respect for leaders' principles about children's learning and development. There are many components to leaders' thinking about the curriculum. The distinction between how and what leaders want children to learn is, however, not always clear. As a result, staff do not always focus precisely enough in day-to-day planning and assessment discussions on what children are learning and how to develop their understanding. Leaders are still developing staff's familiarity with recently updated published guidance setting out the detail of children's stages of learning and development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff, regardless of their role or time they have worked at the nursery, understand what they must do keep children safe, including if they have a concern about someone they work with. Staff are especially alert to changes in children's behaviour that might signal something is wrong, because many might not have the words to say so.

Where concerns arise, leaders are persistent in working with other agencies to make sure children and families get the help they need.

Governors check safeguarding arrangements carefully. They and leaders are open to advice about how to improve practice even further.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not made the distinction between pedagogy and content clear enough in their curriculum thinking. This means that sometimes staff revert to talking about how children are learning, rather than what they are learning and how they can develop children's knowledge and understanding. Leaders should make sure that all staff are consistently as focused on the intended and actual learning as they are on the enjoyment of activities.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 good 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	133731
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10200278
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sam Kubunavanua
Headteacher	Sally Cave
	www.guildfordnscs.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in January 2017.
- The nursery operates on two sites approximately two miles apart. Hazel Avenue is in a residential area and York Road is close to the town centre. The separate family centre provision was not part of this inspection.
- The school provides the universal nursery education offer of 15 hours per week for three- and four-year-olds. There are also funded places for 30 hours per week for three- and four-year-olds, and 15 hours per week for two-year-olds where families meet the eligibility criteria and the option to pay for additional sessions.
- Nearly half of children speak English as an additional language and around a fifth have SEND. There is specialist resourced provision for up to 11 children with more complex needs, predominantly communication and interaction difficulties, at Hazel Avenue. Currently, there are five children on roll with specialist places who are fully integrated into the mainstream nursery but spend some time in Willow Room.
- A small number of children with SEND stay an extra term or longer at nursery before moving to mainstream or special school.
- The school offers breakfast and tea clubs at both sites, subject to demand, during term time, and a holiday club at Hazel Avenue.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and inclusion leader and a range of staff. She met governors, including the chair, and spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector spoke with designated safeguarding leads to review their knowledge, actions and records. This included sampling case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm. She also met with the safeguarding governor and examined checks on the safer recruitment of staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these areas of learning and development: communication and language, physical development and literacy. For each deep dive she met with leaders, looked at curriculum documents, talked with staff and visited nursery rooms on both sites to observe children's learning and development.
- The views of staff and parents were taken into account using Ofsted's online surveys and through discussions with staff and talking to parents as they dropped their children off or picked them up.

Inspection team

Alison Bradley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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