

Inspection of Hartcliffe Nursery School and Children's Centre

Hareclive Road, Hartcliffe, Bristol BS13 0JW

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Children are being let down by this school. It is not helping them to get off to a good start in their education. They are not taught how to settle into school life. They are not learning the things they need to be ready to start primary school in the Reception Year.

Children need to learn to manage their feelings. The nursery is not helping them to do this for themselves. Staff do not teach children how to behave properly. Children are not learning to share, take turns, listen to others, follow instructions, wait for attention or concentrate on an activity.

There is no doubt that staff are eager for children to learn. Adults spend lots of time talking with children and joining in their games. However, staff do not use this time to teach children the things they need to help them make friendships and be successful at school.

Staff want to keep children safe. However, they do not always do everything they could to be sure this happens. Staff do not supervise children well enough. Some do not always act in the way that they should when there are concerns about a child's welfare.

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

Adults lack a coherent view of what children need to learn. Leaders rely on staff to identify and meet children's needs without checking that they are doing so accurately. Staff are not. As a result, children do not learn what they need to. In fact, they learn some unhelpful habits, such as not cooperating or not responding to instructions.

Too often, practitioners plan next steps for children to learn things they can already do or are not yet ready to learn. This is because practitioners do not accurately identify children's starting points. Therefore, they cannot pinpoint what is needed next.

Children do not learn some things that are essential to their personal, social and emotional development. Staff do not teach them to understand the basics, such as the meaning of 'no'. Consequently, children are not learning how to behave well.

Many children join the nursery with limited language or communication skills. They make slow progress in learning to speak because adults do not tune in well to the child's level of development. When staff talk to children, they use high-quality language. They sing lots of songs, which the children enjoy. However, they do not make the most of these experiences. They let children start most conversations, even though many have little language with which to do so. Staff are not proactive

enough in deciding what words children need to learn and practise. In this way, they do not give enough attention to those most in need of language development.

There is one exception. A few children take part in 'Chatterbox' sessions. They are taught to listen to a story with concentration, follow the rules for behaving and learn new words. Staff do not routinely carry forward this clarity and focus into the rest of nursery life.

The difference between Chatterbox sessions and other times is dramatic. For much of their day, children choose what to do. Many wander aimlessly. Others flit between activities. Fighting over toys is commonplace. Staff intervene too late to prevent the problems. The lack of adult leadership means that children are not learning to concentrate or to manage their feelings. There is little care for the feelings of others.

Children are developing poor attitudes to learning. Even when adults try to teach something specific, they struggle to get children to settle and to focus. When told to do something, many children refuse. Some are outwardly defiant.

Some children demand more attention than they are getting. Their behaviour makes it happen. This often gets in the way of learning. When adults set up activities with a group, they are often side-tracked by misbehaviour elsewhere. Consequently, planned learning experiences do not achieve what they might.

Poor behaviour is not the children's fault. It happens because staff do not set clear and consistent expectations. Adults do not teach what things like 'good sitting' or 'good listening' mean. Children can, and should, be taught these things. It happens in the Chatterbox sessions and needs to happen elsewhere.

Many children in the nursery have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They require extra help. In a few cases, they are getting it. Most are not. The support is not meeting their needs because the needs have not been properly identified.

The curriculum and care practices do not meet the needs of the two-year-olds. Staff do not recognise when children need to rest, nor do they give them a chance to sleep. Children are not learning to understand their own feelings and those of others. Leaders have tried very hard to ensure that children have a key person with whom they can build a warm, supportive relationship. However, staffing issues, partly but not entirely caused by COVID-19, have led to some children not having such a bond with a trusted adult.

The headteacher has the expertise to restore quality in the nursery. What is lacking is experience and expertise in her team and the time for her to maintain a strategic view of what is happening. Leaders are too thinly spread. COVID-19 is a factor, but weaknesses go well beyond this. Key staff have left the school and have not been replaced. Inexperienced staff are covering important leadership roles.

Leaders are mindful of staff workload when making decisions, such as the choice of approach to assessment. Unfortunately, the way in which the chosen system is being implemented creates work and does not provide the information needed for staff to know what children need to learn next.

Parents are very positive about the nursery. Leaders have worked hard to gain their trust and get them to see the nursery as a positive force for their children. Leaders have the best intentions to provide high-quality care and education. Unfortunately, the weaknesses in practice mean that children are not getting the experience they deserve.

Governors are ambitious for the nursery to serve its community well. They are not being successful. Their actions are not leading to children being prepared for the move to primary school. In addition, governors have failed to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There is vagueness about whether checks on staff and governors are made.

When aware of concerns, leaders act appropriately. They work with outside agencies to secure the help that children and their families need. However, some staff choose not to follow the system for recording concerns as directed. Consequently, information about some children who are potentially at risk is patchy and, in some instances, it is non-existent.

Staffing is stretched to the extent that children's key workers cannot always be with them. As a result, some children are not forming secure relationships with a trusted adult.

The nursery has a large, outside 'forest' area aimed at promoting children's physical development by providing a range of different surfaces, climbing and swinging opportunities. Risk assessments and staff supervision for this area are not sufficient to prevent children from getting hurt. Some children have had accidents as a result.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Children are at risk of harm because of decisions made by leaders, pressures in the system and lack of action by some staff. Some required checks on staff were missing or incorrectly recorded before the inspection. Staffing pressures are leading to some children not having the security of a warm relationship with a trusted adult. Laxity in supervision means that children's safety is compromised. Some staff fail to report concerns about children, including some who choose not to do so. Leaders need to ensure, as a matter of urgency, that the culture around

safeguarding improves. In particular, they need to assure themselves that all systems for keeping children safe are followed meticulously and consistently by all staff.

- There is no coherent view about what knowledge and skills children will learn during their time in the nursery. Staff do not have sufficient information to assess accurately where children are developmentally and what they need next. As a result, teaching does not meet children’s learning and development needs. This includes the specific needs of children with SEND. Leaders need to reach a solid consensus about what children need to learn. This consensus needs to include sufficient detail so that practitioners can accurately identify children’s starting points and teach the next steps.
- Staff do not establish clear protocols for routines and behaviour. They allow children to ignore instructions, be defiant or act in ways that put themselves and others at risk. Consequently, children are developing poor attitudes to learning. Leaders need to urgently establish clear expectations for children’s behaviour and ensure that staff apply them consistently.
- The headteacher’s time is too thinly stretched. Beyond the headteacher, senior leaders are inexperienced as they are still at relatively early stages of their careers. Governors have an overly positive view of the quality of provision. Therefore, the leadership of the nursery does not have the capacity to make the necessary improvements by itself. Leaders need to work with other agencies as needed to build the capacity to improve the nursery quickly and sustainably.
- The school may not appoint early career teachers.

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	108906
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	10200975
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	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alex Wilkinson
Headteacher	Natascha Barrett
Website	www.hartcliffenursery.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for children from two years old until they leave to join the Reception Year at primary school.
- It is required to meet the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage.
- It is one of 13 nursery schools maintained by the City of Bristol local authority.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, who is also acting special educational needs coordinator, the deputy special educational needs coordinator, other school staff, the chair of governors and two other members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed children playing in classrooms and outside. They spoke with children as they were playing. Inspectors visited a Chatterbox session.
- Inspectors met with teachers and practitioners. They spoke with other staff as they visited classrooms.
- Inspectors inspected safeguarding by meeting with the headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead, speaking to teaching and support staff, observing children around the nursery and scrutinising risk assessments, records of accidents and documents relating to staff recruitment and child protection.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaires for staff and Ofsted’s online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included comments received via the free text facility. Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to the nursery.

Inspection team

Sandy Hayes, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Gill Jones

Her Majesty’s Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email .

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022