

Inspection of a good school: Hillside Nursery School

Cedar Avenue, Haslingden, Rossendale, Lancashire BB4 5NH

Inspection date: 25 January 2023

Outcome

Hillside Nursery School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children are eager to come to Hillside Nursery School. They are greeted warmly when they arrive each day and look forward to exploring the high-quality resources and activities that adults have prepared for them.

Children settle quickly. They come into an environment where they feel safe and secure. Children benefit from the nurturing relationships that they have with staff. They trust staff to care for them when they need comfort or reassurance.

Leaders expect all children to do well. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Children enjoy the curriculum that they are offered. Activities hold children's attention, and they are quickly engrossed in learning. By the time that they leave the nursery, children are well prepared for their next steps in education.

Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour. Adults help children play alongside each other and children respond by confidently sharing and taking turns. Adults step in quickly if children need help and guidance. They nip any signs of bullying in the bud.

Rain or shine, children are keen to play in their outdoor area, which is packed full of interesting nooks and crannies. There are hills to scale, trees to climb, dens to hide in and cosy corners in which to talk with friends or share a book.

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

Leaders, governors and staff have created an ambitious curriculum for children. In the main, the curriculum is well designed. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want children to learn and in which order. The key knowledge that staff must teach to children is clearly set out in most areas of learning. However, a small number of areas of learning are less well developed than others.

In the areas of learning that are slightly less well designed, the knowledge and the order that staff want children to learn new information is not as clear as it should be. Occasionally, this hinders some children from learning as well as they could. Nevertheless, most children achieve well, including children with SEND.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the areas of learning that they teach, particularly those adults that teach the older children. They deliver the curriculum consistently well. Adults explain new ideas clearly and in a way that captures the interests of children. In turn, children eagerly engage in the activities that adults prepare. There are plenty of opportunities for children to revisit and to recap important learning in adult-led activities and in free play. Adults successfully use assessment information to establish how well children are learning the curriculum.

In the provision for two-year-olds, some adults are more confident than others at delivering the curriculum. Where adults are not as confident, children do not learn as well or as much as they could. Despite this, overall, the provision for these children caters well for this age group. Staff build strong and trusting relationships with children. This, along with engaging activities, enable most of these children to get off to a secure start. Staff successfully encourage the youngest children to count, to play, to explore their environment, and to enjoy the stories that they hear.

Communication and language are an important part of the curriculum. Staff use their interactions with children well to develop children's language and vocabulary. Staff are quick to build on children's interests and are responsive when children demonstrate curiosity. They take every opportunity to reinforce language and to give children the confidence to use their vocabulary in different contexts.

The regular sound of songs and rhymes is a notable feature of school life. Children are keen and confident to join in, singing with gusto, and happily adding actions to songs, such as 'Row, row, row your boat.' The sharing of stories is a popular part of the day. Children are enthralled and attentive when adults share a picture book with them and their friends. Older children begin to learn the initial phonetic sounds of simple words and how to blend sounds to make simple words.

Leaders and staff know each child's needs well. This starts with building relationships with families before a child joins the school. Staff are alert to any barriers that children may be facing. This ensures that they are quick to identify any child that might be struggling or have SEND. They use their knowledge of each child well to put the right strategies in place to make sure that children get the support that they need.

Children play well together. They are thoughtful and considerate of each other. Children are used to talking about their feelings and are confident to say what makes them happy, angry or scared.

Governors know the school well and hold leaders fully to account for their work to improve the curriculum. Staff absence and staffing changes in this small school have had a negative influence on how some staff feel about their workload and well-being.

However, governors are aware of this and are taking swift and effective action to address the situation. Despite this, staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that everyone working in school understands the important part they play in keeping children safe. Leaders and staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures. Staff are effective advocates for children and are confident to report their concerns, no matter what they might be. They are vigilant in looking for indications that children could be at risk of harm.

When safeguarding needs are identified, leaders engage well with external agencies to get timely support for children and their families.

Leaders ensure that children learn about different risks in a way that is appropriate for their age and their developmental understanding.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of areas of learning, leaders have not considered exactly what children should learn and in what order. This hinders some children from achieving as highly as they could. Leaders should finalise the curriculum content in these remaining few areas to ensure that staff know exactly what knowledge children must learn.
- At times, a small number of staff do not deliver the curriculum for the two-year-olds as clearly and precisely as they could. Where this is the case, a few children do not learn as well as they should. Leaders should continue to train staff, so that they have the knowledge and confidence to deliver the curriculum effectively.

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/outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2016.

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.

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	119093
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10275800
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	1 to 4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Eileen Melling
Headteacher	Christina Holdsworth
Website	www.haslingdenhillside-nursery-school.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 July 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- At the time of this inspection, the headteacher was absent from the school. In the past year, there has been an unsettled period in the school due to staff absence and changes in staffing.
- The school offers provision for two-year-old children.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that 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 carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: early reading including aspects of communication and language; mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the senior teacher, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teaching staff, looked at samples of children's work, observed children and spoke to some of them about their learning.

- An inspector talked to children about their favourite books and stories. The inspector also observed children sharing a story with an adult.
- In the absence of the headteacher, inspectors spoke with the chair of governors regarding aspects of senior leadership. They spoke with the senior teacher, who was also the deputy designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors were not able to speak to the special educational needs coordinator. Instead, inspectors completed a range of additional activities to ascertain the quality of education for children with SEND in the school. This included talking to parents and carers, the senior teacher, the governor for SEND and speaking with a sample of primary schools that children with SEND move on to at their next stage of education. Inspectors also scrutinised SEND documentation.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of staff, which focused on the well-being and safeguarding of children.
- An inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector also spoke to a representative of Lancashire local authority and an external school improvement partner that works with the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to school improvement, safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. They also spoke with children throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Pamela Potter

Ofsted Inspector

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