

Inspection of an outstanding school: Henry Allen Nursery School

Mitchell Walk, Amersham, Buckinghamshire HP6 6NW

Inspection dates: 31 January 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children are happy and safe at Henry Allen. Staff build strong and caring relationships with the children. They provide consistently positive and encouraging support so that children develop well, both academically and pastorally. One parent expressed the views of others when they said, 'The staff are amazing. They make a real effort with every child.'

Leaders are ambitious for all children. The school's vision, 'learn to play – play to learn', is thoughtfully implemented across every curriculum area. As a result, children develop high levels of confidence and independence. Leaders succeed in their determination for the school to be inclusive. The specific needs of children are exceptionally well considered. Trips, such as visits to local farms, are for everyone. Leaders give opportunities for children to develop an appreciation of culture. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Children behave kindly to each other. They follow well-established routines willingly. This ensures a calm and safe learning environment. On the rare occasions when someone is unkind, adults quickly provide helpful support. Children play happily together, and they learn to share. They understand the rules. For example, they know that they need to tidy away equipment after using it.

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

Leaders have constructed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum across all seven areas of early learning. They use their considerable expertise to plan activities that build and connect children's knowledge in small steps. Staff follow children's interests when

choosing activities that will help them to learn. For example, staff use children's interest in maps to encourage them to develop their control of pencils and pens.

Leaders are ambitious to provide the very best opportunities for all children. This includes providing thoughtful, specialist support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are quick to identify any difficulties children face. Leaders ensure that children get any additional help they need. For example, many children start school with limited communication skills. The school works closely with a speech and language therapist. The therapist has trained both staff and parents on how to improve children's speaking skills. As a result, by the time they are ready to transition to the Reception Year, most children can talk well.

Leaders plan many opportunities for children to develop a love of reading. Younger children enjoy sharing a book with staff and pointing at the pictures. They become familiar with certain books through the daily story time sessions. Leaders ensure that children who are ready progress on to recognising the sounds that some letters make or learn how to blend a few letters together.

Leaders have a detailed and precise understanding of the next steps for children's learning. However, the systems for sharing these next steps with all staff are not consistently effective. In some areas of the curriculum, such as personal, social and emotional development, physical development and understanding the world, staff are exceptionally well informed about what children need to learn. In other areas, such as communication and language, or in literacy, staff do not always know how to promote children's next steps through the range of activities on offer.

Staff help children to gain confidence in the wider world. Families share their cultural and religious festivals with each other. Children enjoy participating in a wide range of activities, such as climbing trees, strawberry picking, horse riding and visiting their local library. Staff teach children how to stay healthy. For example, they promote the importance of looking after teeth.

Leaders and governors have an ambitious vision: to continue to make improvements to the school. For example, they have identified that they want to improve attendance so that all children can take full advantage of the curriculum on offer. Staff are deeply committed to their roles. They are supportive of leaders. They say that leaders are always mindful of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained. They are vigilant and report any concerns they may have about a child quickly. Leaders follow up all concerns swiftly. Records of actions taken are not always sufficiently detailed; however, this does not put children at risk. Leaders work well with a range of external agencies to make sure that children get the help they need. Leaders' checks to ensure that all adults are suitable to work with children are rigorous.

Children learn how to stay safe and healthy. They understand how the rhyme 'if you pick, do not lick, you might get sick' reminds them about the dangers of eating plants.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few of the early years curriculum areas, leaders do not communicate their expectations for children's learning as effectively as they might. This means that some staff do not have enough guidance about what to teach or emphasise when working with children. Leaders should ensure that all staff understand the key knowledge children need to learn so that their understanding builds cumulatively over time.

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 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in March 2017.

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	110195
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10227206
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	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Karen Bates
Headteachers	Charlotte MacDonald and Julie Manning
Website	www.henryallen.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school includes provision for two-year olds.
- The school's two experienced teachers took up the shared headship in September 2022.
- Henry Allen is federated with two other local nursery schools, Bowerdean and Mapledean. The local governing committee covers all three nursery schools.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, attendance records, minutes of governing body meetings, school improvement plans, school policies and information on the school’s website.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, mathematics and understanding of the world. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and activities, spoke to teachers, spoke to some children about their learning and observed children at work.
- Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding, looked at records and scrutinised the school’s safeguarding practice.
- An inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator to find out how the school supports pupils with SEND to follow the curriculum. This involved reviewing documentation to see how pupils with SEND were being supported.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parents’ free-text comments.

Inspection team

Clare Morgan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jon Hills

Ofsted Inspector

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