

Inspection of an outstanding school: Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School

Sandy Lane, Orford, Warrington, Cheshire WA2 9HY

Inspection date:

14 March 2023

Outcome

Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School is a magical place for young children to play and learn in. The school motto, 'Nurture curiosity and inspire imagination', is at the heart of everything this school does. Leaders and staff are highly ambitious for all children, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make sure that children are exceptionally well prepared for their move into the Reception Year.

The learning environment inside and outside is impressive. High-quality learning opportunities capture children's interests and imaginations. Children love to learn, and respond enthusiastically to all that is on offer. They enjoy hunting for spiders and slugs in the 'Robin Wood Forest' and jumping through muddy puddles together. Children play happily and make many friends.

Staff have extremely high expectations of children's behaviour. Familiar routines, such as singing and family group time, help provide a settled and calm environment in which children thrive. Throughout the nursery, children learn how to be kind, considerate and well-mannered. The excellent relationships that they share with adults and with each other help them to feel happy and safe. Staff deal with any rare incidents of unkind behaviour kindly and effectively.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about what they want all children to learn, from the moment that they start at the school through to the time that they leave. In all areas of learning, knowledge is broken down and organised into small learning steps. This helps children, including those in the specially resourced provision for children with SEND (specially resourced provision), to achieve exceptionally well.

High-quality staff training ensures that staff are well equipped to deliver the curriculum. They are very knowledgeable about the developmental needs of two-, three- and four-year-old children. Staff regularly check what children know and can do. They recap on

previous learning and close any gaps that children may have. This means that children, including those with SEND, achieve the best possible outcomes.

Leaders have made sure that staff have the knowledge that they need to develop children's communication and language skills. Adults engage in high-quality conversations with children as they learn and play. They use rhymes and songs throughout the day to help establish routines that children remember and love. Staff get down to the child's level and narrate what a child is doing, adding new and specific vocabulary. Children's vocabulary quickly expands as a result.

A strong reading culture exists in the school. Across the learning environments, books are celebrated. Staff enjoy reading and re-reading stories to children. They make story time an enjoyable experience. Children happily listen and join in with the stories that are shared.

The provision for two-year-olds, and for children in the specially resourced provision, is especially strong. Staff are highly skilled at helping these children to develop their personal, social and physical skills. Workshops are used across the curriculum to help parents and carers know how they can support home learning. Staff also offer and provide support to parents so that they can meet their child's individual needs. Parents value and appreciate the regular group sessions that staff lead. Many parents shared the view that staff at the school are one in a million who go above and beyond so that their children can achieve their potential.

Leaders and staff know each child's needs well. They make sure that strong relationships with children and their families are built before a child joins the school. This means that staff are quick to identify any potential barriers to learning, including SEND, that children may face. Children who need extra help benefit from a wide range of support.

Leaders have devised a curriculum that helps children learn about their local community and the wider world. A wide range of trips, visitors and experiences bring learning to life. These include visits to the library and museum, and sessions run in school by a local potter and author.

Staff training is a high priority for leaders, and it is valued by staff. They are proud to work at the school, and enjoy working with each other. They said that leaders are highly considerate of their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that everyone working in the school understands their role in keeping children safe. Staff receive regular training and updates to make sure that they are aware of the different ways in which young children may display signs of potential harm. Staff know children very well and act quickly when they have any concerns. Leaders respond promptly to these concerns. They work closely with a range of external agencies to make sure that the help and support that children may need are provided.

Across the curriculum, children learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, children learn to use scissors correctly and how to be safe near water.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 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.

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	110956
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10256234
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	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Maureen Banner
Headteacher	Marcia Atherton
Website	www.sandylanenurseryandforestschoo.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.
- The school provides part-time and full-time funded places for two- to four-year-old children.
- School leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- School leaders provide specially resourced provision for children with a wide range of needs, including hearing impairment, visual impairment and speech, language and communication. This is a local authority commissioned resource provision for 22 children.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders to gain an understanding of the school's curriculum and its impact.

- Inspectors held discussions with parents. An inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. A meeting took place with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors spent time observing in the classrooms. This included observing the quality of the interactions between staff and children, and the daily routines that staff have established. Inspectors also talked to staff and children and observed activities to determine the impact of the curriculum and teaching methods on children's learning, development and well-being.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They took account of the responses from staff to Ofsted's online survey and they gathered the views of both staff and children throughout the inspection.
- Safeguarding records and procedures were reviewed. Inspectors also spoke to staff and parents about safeguarding.

Inspection team

Julie Barlow, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Victoria Burnside

Ofsted Inspector

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