

Inspection of an outstanding school: Batford Nursery School

Holcroft Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 5BQ

Inspection date:

19 April 2023

Outcome

Batford Nursery School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children in Batford Nursery benefit from a highly ambitious curriculum. This includes a wide range of opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills they learn. They work with adults who know them extremely well. This means that children are supported to achieve as well as they possibly can.

Children follow carefully structured daily routines. This helps them to make the most of the wide range of learning activities available. It also supports them to demonstrate impressive levels of independence. Children feel a strong sense of belonging. This is seen in the confident way they interact with each other and with their trusted adults.

Adult guidance helps children to manage themselves very effectively. This includes establishing a secure understanding of how to make safe behaviour choices. Children have a maturity beyond their stage of development. As a result, the learning environment is focused and safe. Children instinctively seek support from adults, and they are assured that adults can solve any problem.

Parents describe the school as a 'magical' place for children to learn. This is reflected in the way children arrive at school happily and get immediately absorbed in their learning. Children have an exceptional start to their school life.

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

The school is a beacon for outstanding practice. Leaders and staff have designed an ambitious and relevant curriculum. This builds on key 'aspirations' that children need to meet over time. These underpin the meaningful learning that takes place each day. Leaders have high expectations for what children can achieve. Curriculum plans set out the appropriate order for new knowledge to be taught. This supports children to make the right next steps. Staff are experts at leading learning for children in this age group. During child-initiated learning, interactions instigated by adults are highly effective. This

means every opportunity is used to extend and embed the new knowledge that children learn.

Staff use their secure knowledge of each child to adapt learning to their needs. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Adults use observations of children's play to check what they know and can do. Where more practice with a skill or activity might help, adults respond immediately. This ensures that children build new knowledge on secure foundations. Children who need additional support are accurately identified. Their progress is tracked carefully. Detailed plans help children with SEND access the same learning as their peers.

Children's language development is supported very effectively. Adults in the setting model the correct use of language and new vocabulary. This inspires children to do the same. The strong oral language focus helps children to express their ideas, opinions and feelings well. Children use their language skills to socialise and negotiate as they play. This helps them to manage any worries they have. Leaders' systematic approach to using visual communications is effective. This helps children for whom spoken English might otherwise be a barrier. Children are exposed to the sounds, rhymes and rhythms that prepare them well to start reading.

Clear routines and consistently high expectations mean that children behave well. They know right from wrong and show sensitivity to each other's feelings. Children form very positive attachments to the adults in school. They are cooperative and follow instructions they are given.

Leaders are committed to the wider development of children, including their sense of identity. As such, children are exposed to a wide range of enriching experiences. These include yoga and meeting visitors who talk about the jobs they do, such as a dentist and a police officer. Children also access regular specialist forest school learning in their woodland area. Tuition in these sessions is ambitious and precise. Children are highly absorbed in this learning. They are motivated to excel as they put their new knowledge into action.

Staff make purposeful and caring connections with parents. They ensure that parents receive clear communications about their children's learning. Parents value this information, which helps them to build on their child's learning at home.

Governors reflect the highest ambitions for children in the setting. They are knowledgeable and have robust systems in place to fulfil their responsibilities. Governors oversee curriculum developments and check routinely on the effectiveness of leaders' improvement actions taken. Leaders are reflective and seek to further enhance the provision wherever they can.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a shared and well-understood culture of safeguarding. All staff

have effective training to fulfil their responsibilities. Any concerns arising are shared swiftly. Leaders maintain a robust oversight of safeguarding records. They seek additional support, professional services and intervene early in the interests of children's safety.

Leaders ensure that all mandatory vetting checks are completed for staff working in the setting.

Children are taught to stay safe and to share any worries they might have. They learn about keeping their bodies safe and healthy. They are empowered to say 'stop' using a hand signal if they are uncomfortable about the actions of others.

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 January 2013.

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	117068
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10268443
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Laura Williams
Headteacher	Sarah Hedges
Website	www.batfordnursery.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been a change in headteacher since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up post in January 2018.
- The school shares the same site and some resources as Batford Day Care, which is a separately registered provision for children from birth to five years.
- The school does not use off-site alternative provision.

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 held meetings with the headteacher, the senior teacher, the special educational needs coordinator and a range of other staff to explore provision across the school, including curriculum design and provision for children with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with two governors, including the chair of governors. A separate discussion was held with an improvement partner from the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in three areas of learning: communication and language, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and staff, spoke with children about their learning and looked at examples of their work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, the school's secretary, governors and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- During the inspection, inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, curriculum plans, school development plans and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- Inspectors also spoke with children about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a child in this school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of children in classrooms and outside areas.
- Inspectors considered 31 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. Inspectors also considered 15 responses to Ofsted's survey for school staff.

Inspection team

Kristian Hewitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Isabel Davis

His Majesty's Inspector

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