

Inspection of a good school: Hardmoor Early Years Centre

Leaside Way, Bassett Green, Southampton, Hampshire SO16 3EP

Inspection date: 18 July 2023

Outcome

Hardmoor Early Years Centre continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

It is clear for all to see how much children relish being part of this welcoming and inclusive place. Each day, children arrive with smiles on their faces. They are eager to see the fascinating and exciting learning experiences that await them, both inside and outdoors. Children are greeted by friendly staff, who make sure that they are happy, settled and ready to begin their learning. This gets each day off to a flying start.

High expectations permeate the nursery. Adults want the very best for every child. There is a palpable buzz as children learn and play cheerfully with their friends. For instance, children enjoy collecting eggs from the chickens, planting and watering seeds, going off on a bug hunt and exploring the wooded area. They take delight in 'camping' in the tent that they have built, while others carefully navigate their way across the stepping stones. Children become independent, confident and resilient learners.

Children behave superbly and show kindness to each other. They understand the importance of turn-taking and sharing. Children are safe and are very well cared for by staff. Any minor upsets are quickly dealt with. Consequently, children flourish here.

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

Leaders and governors have an ambitious vision. They work effectively to make this vision a reality. Leaders have made well-considered improvements to the curriculum to ensure that children experience varied and engaging learning opportunities. This interesting curriculum is well sequenced and precisely identifies the essential knowledge and skills that children need to learn and remember. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs identified accurately and early. Through carefully planned support, all children access a broad curriculum successfully.

Leaders' commitment to high-quality communication and language is evident throughout the nursery. Listening to stories, singing songs and rhymes play a key part in developing children's vocabulary and nurturing their love of reading. Staff ensure that children get to

know selected stories well. Children take great delight in retelling and re-enacting these with their friends. Children were, for example, enthusiastically joining in 'Hey Diddle Diddle' in the outdoor area and were inventing their own versions of the story. Children also learn Makaton to help them to communicate and share their ideas and feelings confidently.

Leaders provide effective training for staff. As a result, over time, the teaching of the curriculum is becoming increasingly expert. Staff provide carefully chosen activities and resources that foster children's natural curiosity about the world around them. Overall, staff provide an ongoing dialogue during play. They emphasise and model appropriate language and vocabulary well. However, sometimes staff do not make the most of opportunities to deepen children's learning. This means that, on occasion, teaching does not promote children's communication and language as effectively as it could.

Relationships between staff and children are warm and nurturing. Staff encourage children to try hard and keep going when they find things difficult. Children are adept at taking safe risks as part of their outdoor learning. This helps children to build their self-confidence and resilience. Staff teach children the importance of healthy lifestyles. For example, children learn to make healthy choices about food when they enjoy fresh fruit and vegetables as snacks. Staff use a range of books and resources to promote children's understanding of diversity and equality. Children learn about different religious festivals through the year.

Governors work well with leaders to make sure the nursery continues to go from strength to strength. They understand their role in maintaining the high quality of education. Governors challenge and hold leaders to account effectively. Staff understand and support leaders' vision for children. They appreciate and praise the way that leaders care about their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders manage recruitment processes well, and records are clear and well organised. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know the children and their families well. Staff are vigilant. They are alert to any changes in behaviour that may indicate a child is worried or upset, because some children might not have the words to say so. Leaders follow up any issues swiftly and sensitively. Where necessary, leaders make timely and appropriate referrals to other agencies to protect children from harm. This enables children and their families to get the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teaching does not support children effectively enough to develop their communication and language. This means that not all children are achieving as well as they could. Leaders need to continue to develop staff's approach to teaching so it

enables them to consistently help all children deepen their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum.

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. 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 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	115831
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10256428
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	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Williams
Headteacher	Melanie Jackson (Head of centre)
Website	www.hardmoor.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Hardmoor Early Years Centre is a maintained nursery school with provision for children aged two to five. It joined the Learning Federation, which is part of the Holy Family Partnership of Schools, in April 2023.
- This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the provision for children under the age of two. This part of the school is registered separately with Ofsted but is located in the same building.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.

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 leaders from the Learning Federation, and with staff and children from the school.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. An inspector also spoke with a representative from Southampton local authority.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives in communication and language, physical development and literacy. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited classrooms and outdoor learning areas, spoke to staff and talked with children.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding.
- The inspection team spoke to a range of staff about their views on the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted’s questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the additional free-text responses. An inspector had informal conversations with some parents at the start of the morning and afternoon nursery sessions.

Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

James Stuart

His Majesty’s Inspector

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