

Inspection of a good school: Highfield Nursery School

Highfield Road, Saltley, Birmingham, West Midlands B8 3QU

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children make an exceptional start to education at Highfield Nursery School. Kindness and quiet determination underpin the school's commitment to every child. Children are happy and thrive on the care and support they receive. One parent said, 'This school has made the most special difference to my child and my family.' This view was echoed by many others.

Caring staff and inspirational leaders set high expectations for early learning and life experiences. Children rise to meet these expectations and quickly develop the skills and knowledge that will prepare them well for the next steps in learning. An exciting and well-considered environment enriches early learning experiences.

Relationships are encouraging, supportive and ambitious for children. Staff work closely with families to understand the children's needs and their previous experiences. Staff act promptly when children need help or support. This means that behaviour across all classes is calm, respectful and highly purposeful.

From the outset, there is a relentless commitment to enriching children's lives. Visits to places such as the seaside, theatres and local shops increase children's understanding of the world around them. Forest school, gardening and frequent visits from artists in residence and musicians develop wider life experiences and creativity.

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

At Highfield, there is a commitment from all staff that every moment will count for every child. Leaders and staff have spent time wisely thinking about and setting out the learning that children will experience throughout their time at the nursery.

Staff are well-trained and incredibly skilled in child development. They carefully adapt how they present new learning to children. For example, staff use puppets to teach new concepts in an exciting and engaging way. Some children missed out on pre-school experiences due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff ensure that any resulting gaps are filled so that no child is left behind in their learning.

Children start at Highfield with varying understanding of English. Staff are skilled in supporting the first steps into speaking English as an additional language. For example, staff were seen modelling concepts such as 'roll' and 'dig' while saying the words aloud. Children responded by copying and using these words in their resulting play and interactions.

The environment has been carefully considered and developed to maximise opportunities for all areas of early learning. For example, children develop their understanding of mathematical concepts by playing with different containers in water or develop motor skills through cutting dough or shaping clay. Books, words and letters are common features of the environment. Staff and children seize every moment to share a story or experiment with letter sounds to develop early phonics and reading skills.

The provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is exemplary. More recently, the school has taken more children with complex needs, such as communication and physical needs. Partnerships with parents and services such as physical development support services mean that there is a precise understanding of these needs. This means that the resulting provision overcomes any barriers to success that children might otherwise experience.

There is a quiet determination that children will get the most from their time at Highfield. The school is tenacious in checking when children do not attend enough and staff follow this up quickly. Consequently, attendance is high and often improves quickly throughout a child's time at Highfield.

The school has carefully considered the skills and experiences children will need to thrive as healthy and caring members of the world around them. Children learn such things as oral hygiene and using cutlery appropriately. They find out about keeping safe and healthy from visits by police officers and nurses. Opportunities to care for caterpillars, butterflies and chicks develop a sense of responsibility and help children to learn about nature.

This is a very positive and inspirational community. Staff feel well supported, and leaders care, respect and value their work. They think the school is well-led and managed. The inspector agrees.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 February 2014.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	103125
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10290512
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sean Delaney
Headteacher	Sharon Lewis (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.hifieldn.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school was one of the founding members of the Birmingham Federation of Maintained Nursery Schools in September 2018. It is one of nine schools in the federation.
- The school also uses a local children's centre at Dyson Gardens when the number of children on roll increases to require additional space. At the time of inspection, this other provision was not being used.
- The school has access to a forest school provision and a horticulture area as part of its provision for outdoor learning.
- The school provides full-time and part-time early years education for children aged two to four.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have considered that in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and children; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children’s interests first.
- During the inspection, the inspector completed deep dives in the following subjects: communication and language, physical development and expressive arts and design. In these subjects, they visited lessons, looked at children’s work, and talked with staff about how these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were planned and taught.
- The inspector observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and children’s behaviour.
- During the inspection, the inspector had formal meetings with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, governors and teaching staff. They also talked informally with parents, carers, children and staff to gather general information about school life.
- The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority. A conversation was also held with members of the governing body.
- The inspector considered a range of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation and plans for improvement. Governor reports were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

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