

Inspection of a good school: Whitehills Nursery School

Acre Lane, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN2 8DF

Inspection date:

21 November 2023

Outcome

Whitehills Nursery School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children learn and play together happily at this warm and inclusive nursery school. Adults take the time to understand the needs of the children in their care. They ensure that the support children receive is well matched to their needs. As a result, children settle well into nursery routines. They develop secure relationships and learn in a positive environment.

The school has set high expectations for all children. Staff plan purposeful activities linked to children's interests. Children are excited and interested in their learning. However, some further refinement is needed in aspects of the planned curriculum.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the nursery school. They appreciate how their child is supported and nurtured. As one parent said, with a comment typical of many, 'It is a wonderful environment for all the children.'

Children behave extremely well. They confidently ask adults for help and feel secure in the knowledge that their needs will be met. Children learn to understand their emotions right from the very start. They learn to recognise, manage and regulate 'big emotions' in an appropriate way. Adults help children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to learn different strategies for when they may feel overwhelmed or upset.

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

The nursery school has recently reconsidered its curriculum. It now outlines what children will learn. It also considers the vocabulary that children will be exposed to in each area of the early years curriculum. However, some of the knowledge that children need to recall and remember is not precise enough. Sometimes, the curriculum does not consider how gaps in children's vocabulary and early conceptual development will be secured.

All staff prioritise children's personal development and communication and language. It is at the heart of the nursery school's curriculum. Children learn to recognise their own wants and needs. They build friendships with their peers. Many invite others to join in with their play. Children learn to make choices in their behaviour. They observe how adults are positive, kind and caring. This provides them with a positive model for their own conduct.

Children receive rich opportunities to enjoy and share books. All children, including those with SEND, readily access stories and books in their play. Adults use these stories to help children to develop their language. For example, after reading several books about space, many children used this experience in their own independent learning to express their ideas about the moon, the stars and the sun. However, the curriculum does not precisely identify how gaps in early language development will be considered and supported.

All the children at the nursery enjoy their learning. They avidly showcase their work to parents at the end of each session. Parents are encouraged to share in their children's education. They receive valuable information about how to support their child in their learning.

Children with SEND access the environment with confidence. The school has ensured that all adults who work closely with these children have the right expertise and knowledge. They are skilled at adapting activities to ensure children with SEND learn well. These children receive a curriculum that is well matched to their needs.

Children enjoy learning about the wider world. Resources and toys in nursery help children to understand the different groups that make up British society. The curriculum provides opportunities for children to experience different festivals, hear stories from different cultures and religions and share food from around the world. The children are looking forward to the 'lantern walk' around the local community, where they will experience the nativity story. Children are well prepared for their move to primary school.

Staff work effectively as a team. The school considers staff's workload and well-being when it introduces changes or new initiatives.

Governors provide effective support for the school. They visit the school regularly to assure themselves that children are learning and achieving. They do not shy away from challenging when there is a need.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not as precise as it could be. It does not give sufficient detail or consideration to some of the key knowledge and early language that children need to know and remember. This risks some children having gaps in their early development. The school must ensure that it further refines its curriculum so that the key knowledge and vocabulary that all children should know and recall in the different areas of learning are detailed and precise.

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 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](#)' 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	121787
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10254892
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	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Terry Wright
Headteacher	Kelly Paulowski
Website	www.whitehillsnurseryschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The nursery 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher to discuss the provision for children with SEND and for those who may speak English as an additional language. The lead inspector spoke with an adviser from the local authority and members of the local governing body.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives into the following areas of learning: communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; and understanding the world. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders and followed this by observing a range of activities in the nursery. They spoke with children and staff.
- Inspectors spoke with parents during the school day. They considered the views expressed through Ofsted’s online surveys.

Inspection team

Shaheen Hussain, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Paul Lowther

Ofsted Inspector

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