

Inspection of a good school: Aspiring Foundations Federated Nursery Schools - Ditton Nursery School

Dundalk Road, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 8DF

Inspection date:

22 February 2024

Outcome

Aspiring Foundations Federated Nursery Schools - Ditton Nursery School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are happy and feel safe at this school. They learn quickly that their feelings, ideas and comments matter to leaders and staff. Teachers and teaching assistants use their expert knowledge to respond well to the individual needs, development and interests of children.

Children achieve well. This is because the school has high expectations for their education. The school focuses successfully on helping children to become confident, skilful learners who are keen to talk and investigate. Children talk with relish about superheroes, zoo animals, pets and the lives of fictional characters in the traditional tales that they learn. They enjoy learning and they want to know even more. Children learn new knowledge, including important words, in different areas of the curriculum.

Children behave very well and are deeply absorbed in their play and activities. They learn from the staff to be kind and to play calmly. Children also learn how to cooperate and be thoughtful. Beginning in the class for two-year-olds, staff help children to become independent. For example, children learn to have a go at putting on their own coat.

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

During a period of much change at the school, leaders at all levels have demonstrated resilience, tenacity and a clear, shared vision to provide high-quality nursery education. They have used their expert understanding of educational research, child development and the areas of learning to inform the continued development of the school. The school make certain that staff are not drawn away into unnecessary tasks and paperwork. This means that staff have enough time to teach the children.

For the most part, the school's curriculum is well thought out. This means that staff mostly understand the essential knowledge that children need to know, as well as when and how to teach it. Children, including those with SEND, achieve well in the different areas of learning. However, the school has not thought well enough about how to connect what children learn in the class for two-year-olds, with what they learn in the class for three- and four-year-olds. This means that staff build some of children's learning less securely than they could.

Staff engage children in many opportunities to talk. In addition, the celebration of books and reading is everywhere at this school. Staff and children can often be found engrossed in sharing fiction and non-fiction books together in small huddles. At other times, staff read and even act out well-chosen stories and rhymes with the children in larger groups. Children keenly select books to explore for themselves. They gain important knowledge about books and how to communicate their own ideas through talk. Children understand the joy that words and the sharing of books can bring.

The school ensures that staff make effective use of assessment strategies to check children's grasp of curriculum content. Staff use assessment information well to improve their teaching, including when deciding what children need to learn next. Staff organise learning activities so that children know and remember key information.

The school collaborates with parents, carers and wider professionals effectively to identify the needs of children with SEND. This approach helps the school to provide children with the support they need at the right time. Children with SEND progress well through the curriculum and in their wider development.

The school acts quickly to find out why some children may be absent from school. The school and governors check information about children's attendance over time carefully. The school explains to parents about the benefits of children's full attendance. Children's attendance is improving well.

Children's behaviour is very positive. Starting in the class for two-year-olds, staff gently and supportively help children to manage their feelings, as well as their responses towards others. Children learn to express their intentions with kind words.

The school provides children with a range of meaningful activities to extend their wider development. For example, it introduces children to the celebrations of different families and communities. Children learn to respect other people.

The governing body supports and challenges the work of the school effectively, such as on finance, SEND, safeguarding and the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some of the school's curriculum does not link children's learning in the class for two-year-olds with that in the class for three- and four-year-olds. This means that the school does not build children's learning of some key knowledge as securely as it could. The school should ensure that all its curriculum builds in a logical order so that children learn well.

Background

When we have judged 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 June 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	110957
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10321313
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	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison Wright
Headteacher	Liane Johnson (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.dittonnurseryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is federated with another local nursery school. An executive headteacher and one governing body are responsible for both schools.
- The executive headteacher, chair of governors and some staff are new to the school since the previous inspection.
- The school provides several places for two-year-old children.
- The school provides some breakfast club and after-school club places for children.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.

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.

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other leaders and the local authority to discuss the work of the school.
- The inspectors completed deep dives in personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and mathematics. They visited activities that involved these and some other areas of learning. Inspectors spoke with the school about its curriculum. They spoke with some children about their learning.
- The inspectors spoke with staff about working at the school and reviewed the responses to Ofsted’s online staff survey.
- There were no responses to Ofsted’s survey for pupils to review.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The lead inspector spoke with some parents at the start of the school day.
- The lead inspector met with some members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors 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.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Sandra Hamilton

Ofsted Inspector

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