

Inspection of Henry Allen Nursery School

Mitchell Walk, Amersham, Buckinghamshire HP6 6NW

Inspection dates: 8 May, 5 and 6 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Children are flourishing at this happy nursery school. They are busy and curious learners. Children concentrate and try hard because they have a thirst for learning and want to succeed. They love exploring, playing and solving problems. Every day brings joyous moments when children delight in their achievements.

The school's outside spaces open up exciting opportunities, where children learn about the natural environment. They relish activities such as searching for wiggly worms and hunting for bugs. Children also learn to recognise risk and to play safely.

A culture of respect and high expectation permeates the school. Children behave exceptionally well. They play happily together, taking turns and sharing equipment. Any upsets are calmly and quickly resolved, and always with patience and kindness. Staff's skilled guidance and support help children to learn to be independent. They enjoy making decisions about their learning, organising resources and helping to tidy up.

At the heart of this school are high aspirations for all children to achieve success and enjoy learning. Children quickly acquire new knowledge, skills and confidence. This enables them to achieve the best possible outcomes and to be exceptionally well prepared for starting school.

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

A high-quality ambitious curriculum and expert teaching enable children to get off to a flying start to their education. A hallmark of this school is the wonderful care and nurturing relationships that staff forge with children. This enables young children to feel emotionally secure and safe. These are just some of the many reasons that parents and staff describe the school as 'a very special place'. One parent, typical of many, commented, 'I couldn't be happier with this nursery. The staff are amazing, and my child wants to go to nursery all the time.'

The school's sharp focus on developing children's communication and language stands out. Staff are highly skilled in communicating, including through Makaton signing and the use of visual prompts. They continually model language and introduce children to ambitious vocabulary. Staff build on children's responses and encourage 'back and forth' dialogue. All children benefit from this rich provision, particularly children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

From their very first days in nursery, children enjoy daily stories, rhymes and songs. These develop children's love of reading and enrich their vocabulary. Children enjoy listening to stories and joining in with actions that accompany this. When children are ready, staff extend children's aural awareness to letter sounds.

Staff understand children's needs and interests exceptionally well. This enables them to plan children's next steps with precision. They design stimulating activities, which build children's cumulative knowledge and spark their interest highly successfully. Every moment is a learning opportunity, for example counting fruit during snack time and comparing with the food eaten by 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'.

The school's support for children with SEND is exemplary. As a result, children with SEND are thriving. Additional needs are identified without delay. This starts before children begin nursery, through the school's excellent partnerships with parents and through very effective induction processes. Children receive high-quality support, including specialist input and programmes to develop their speech and communication. Additionally, staff provide patient, nurturing support for children who find it difficult to regulate their emotions.

The school provides an impressive range of experiences beyond the classroom. These contribute very well to children's personal development. Outdoor learning in the forest school is an important and integral element of the school's offer. Other experiences range from weekly playball and dance sessions to visits to the locality and beyond. Staff plan meaningful opportunities to enhance children's cultural awareness. For example, through sharing families' celebrations of festivals, such as Diwali and Eid.

Governors, leaders and staff hold a shared vision and demonstrable commitment to provide the very best for every child. Staff love working here. They have nothing but praise for leaders' support and consideration of their well-being. Staff benefit from focused, purposeful training and opportunities to enhance their professional knowledge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	110195
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10296150
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	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Karen Bates
Headteacher	Charlie Macdonald (co-headteacher) Julie Manning (co-headteacher)
Website	www.henryallen.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Henry Allen is a maintained nursery school with provision for two- to five-year-old children. Most children attend part time.
- The school is federated with another maintained nursery, Bowerdean and Mapledean. The schools share the same governing body.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

The inspection started on 8 May 2024. Inspectors returned on 5 and 6 June 2024 to gather additional evidence to complete the inspection, in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence policy](#).

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, physical development, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, spoke to teachers, visited classrooms and outdoor learning areas and talked with children.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss the school's provision for children with SEND. They also met leaders to discuss other aspects of the school's work, including provision for personal development and behaviour and attendance.
- 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.
- The lead inspector met with six members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She held an online meeting with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of morning nursery. They took account of parents' responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered staff's views during discussions with them and through their responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Sue Cox, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Ellison	His Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Botting	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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