

Inspection of Highfield Lane Nursery School

1 Puddingstone Drive, St. Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 0GX

Inspection date: 20 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
------------------------------	--------------------

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children thrive in this exceptional learning environment. They are excited to arrive and become deeply absorbed in the wonderful learning opportunities staff provide. Energetic staff embrace children's interests and create inspirational learning opportunities that support their learning. For example, nursery children create their own air hockey table out of boxes, chalk and wooden blocks. Staff extend children's learning by encouraging them to create and update scoreboards. This enhances children's mathematical understanding.

Managers work hard to establish a highly effective key-person system. This means children form exceptionally close bonds with staff and flourish in their nurturing care. Babies beam with delight when they wake from naps and see their key person. Older children cuddle up to staff and explore books together in cosy reading dens. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from highly experienced and knowledgeable one-to-one support. This enables them to settle well and make excellent progress from their starting points.

The nursery promotes children's self-confidence in exceptional ways. Children proudly show off their achievements on the 'learning tree'. The nursery's mascots, 'Tryasaurus', 'Thinkasaurus' and 'Explorasaurus', celebrate children's skills and efforts during activities. Staff encourage all children to complete age-appropriate tasks. Toddlers demonstrate a deep sense of accomplishment by feeding themselves at mealtimes. Older children are encouraged to change their clothes for sports sessions and take responsibility for their possessions.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Partnerships with parents are of an exceptionally high standard. Parents are encouraged to play an active role in children's learning. They visit the nursery to read stories with children and explore their unique customs. Parents access online information sessions to support their knowledge, and they welcome opportunities to have input into the nursery's routines. For example, parents attend tasting sessions when the nursery updates its delicious menus.
- Children's transitions through the nursery are exceptionally well managed. Children spend time familiarising themselves with their new environment alongside their supportive key staff. Parents have access to 'borrow bags' to help manage changes in children's routines. These bags contain books and resources around topics such as potty training and the arrival of new siblings. They provide support and advice for both parents and children.
- Inspirational leaders and managers are passionate about their role in supporting staff development. Staff benefit from highly effective training programmes. These support them in delivering exceptional care and teaching to all children.

Staff embrace opportunities to take on additional responsibilities in the nursery. They talk passionately about the projects they undertake around supporting diversity, healthy eating and promoting fundamental British values.

- Highly effective strategies are in place to support children's behaviour. Children explore their emotions and are supported to understand the impact the resulting behaviours can have on others. These strategies are used across the nursery and are adapted well to support the needs of all children. For example, babies and toddlers investigate soft toys and sensory resources depicting characters that reflect their moods. Older children explore the same characters in books and discuss their characteristics with staff. As a result of this consistent approach, children are kind and behave well. Babies play happily alongside one another, and older children take turns well in activities.
- The nursery supports children's communication and language development superbly. Staff in all rooms use sign language during interactions with children. Children respond well to this. They reply verbally and using signs, enabling them to communicate their needs from a very early age. Staff role model complex language that supports children to develop an extensive vocabulary. For example, young children use words such as 'capacity' and 'overflow' when exploring different containers in a science activity. Staff practice is particularly strong when supporting children who speak English as an additional language. Their outstanding relationships with families and innovative strategies support children to make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Staff embrace children's curiosity and develop their critical thinking skills incredibly well. They plan exciting activities that build on what children know and need to learn next. For example, children are re-visiting a construction activity where they create a bridge using wooden sticks. Together they explore how they can make it strong enough to support models of various animals. Once complete, children delight at observing those models that balance and those that fall into the water below.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY537245
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10344390
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	70
Number of children on roll	99
Name of registered person	Seymour House Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP533301
Telephone number	01727232232
Date of previous inspection	20 September 2018

Information about this early years setting

Highfield Lane Nursery School registered in 2016. The nursery employs 25 members of childcare staff. Of these, 16 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above. This includes one member of staff with qualified teacher status and one with early years teacher status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 7am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Antonia Campbell

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The inspector considered the views of parents by speaking to several parents during the inspection and reviewing feedback letters.
- The inspector looked at relevant documents, including evidence of the suitability of all staff.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and children during activities.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching to assess the impact on children's learning.
- The inspector and the manager completed joint observations of activities to assess the quality of teaching.
- The inspector held discussions with staff about the monitoring of learning and development in the nursery and tracked the progress of several children.

We carried out this inspection under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the early years foundation stage.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024