

Inspection of Hurst Court Day Nursery School

Hurst Court, 230 Springfield Road, Chelmsford CM2 6BP

Inspection date: 5 September 2025

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
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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 vibrant learning environment, which sparks their curiosity and engages their interest. They benefit from a highly stimulating and well-structured learning environment, with an inviting, age-appropriate curriculum that promotes independence, exploration and engagement. Leaders develop an ambitious, detailed, progressive curriculum that builds precisely on what children already know and can do and promotes the all-round development of children.

Secure and nurturing key-person relationships give children confidence to explore. For example, babies explore movement and balance by crawling, standing and taking early steps. They test their balance, strength and coordination, showing determination as they try new physical challenges. Older children have opportunities to expand their experiences and express their creativity by engaging with the works of different artists and media.

Children's behaviour is exemplary, and staff embed highly effective strategies that enable even the youngest children to understand and regulate their emotions. For example, on arrival, children confidently self-register at the 'affirmation mirror', repeating positive statements about themselves. As a result, children develop resilience, sustain focus and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning across the nursery.

Children benefit from staff's thorough knowledge of them, with staff expertly adapting their teaching approaches to create challenging and inclusive learning experiences where all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can flourish. As a result, all children are well prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the next stage in their education.

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

- Rigorous and ongoing monitoring of children's progress and staff's practice ensures that all children benefit from consistently high-quality, stimulating learning experiences, enabling them to make rapid and sustained progress from their starting points. For example, during a sand-tray activity, staff adapt support to meet each child's individual needs, from identifying sounds to 'air writing', enabling children to develop excellent literacy skills.
- The highly trained, dedicated staff provide stimulating, carefully planned experiences that inspire curiosity and create moments of awe and wonder for children each day. For example, babies explore ice melting to reveal frozen objects in the water tray, and toddlers explore 'space' by reading stories with accompanying sensory experiences, engaging their imagination to visit other planets and understand scientific concepts.

- Children with SEND are swiftly identified and receive personalised support in the nursery, enabling them to make accelerated progress and close learning gaps. Leaders deploy additional funding effectively to provide a targeted curriculum and additional adult support, enhancing engagement and promoting successful outcomes. They work seamlessly with external professionals, ensuring that each child's individual needs are met and their progress maximised.
- Children develop a deep love of reading in a language-rich environment. They are surrounded by numerous opportunities to enjoy books, with carefully chosen texts placed across all areas of the nursery. For example, recipe books are in the home corner and books about growing are in the garden. Every space is enriched to spark curiosity and imagination, and children delight in sharing stories at every opportunity. For example, babies engage with fascination as staff read 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar', eagerly joining in by feeding laminated food pieces into a toy caterpillar's mouth. Older children snuggle with staff to enjoy the calm and focus of the reading time together.
- Children develop their mathematical skills through a structured, progressive approach. Young children skilfully sing number rhymes and expertly count out pieces of their snack onto their plate, while older children confidently and independently play number-based board games with friends, supporting their social skills effectively.
- Children benefit immensely from a wide variety of enriching learning opportunities. Children engage in cooking sessions, and they plant, tend and harvest fruits and vegetables throughout the year. At the first harvest of the season, a tiny carrot is displayed in the nursery foyer for families to talk about with their children. Consequently, children develop practical life skills, a sense of achievement and an understanding of where food comes from, while enhancing their social and communication abilities.
- Mealtimes are purposeful social occasions where staff skilfully engage children in meaningful conversations, encouraging them to share their experiences and talk about healthy choices. Children show high levels of independence as they pour drinks, scrape food off their plates and tidy away. The nursery provides freshly prepared, nutritious meals, and staff extend children's understanding of healthy eating through sharing recipes with families to enjoy at home.
- Partnerships with parents are exceptional. Staff maintain highly effective communication through daily discussions, the nursery app and regular questionnaires, ensuring parents are fully informed about their child's progress. Families value the personalised support provided, including 'borrow bags', containing information packs, guidance on key developmental milestones and internet safety workshops. This collaborative approach enables parents to feel confident, reassured and actively involved in their child's learning and well-being.
- Leaders encourage the professional growth of staff through structured supervision, area leadership roles and reflective practice. For instance, following effective training, staff become 'champions' in a specific area of learning, such as mathematics. They teach children about 'place value', which benefits their understanding of addition and subtraction. As a result, staff form a skilled, enthusiastic and committed team that gives children the very best foundations for their early education.

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	EY472673
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10407779
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	1 to 4
Total number of places	60
Number of children on roll	94
Name of registered person	Seymour House Ltd.
Registered person unique reference number	RP533301
Telephone number	01245495455
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2020

Information about this early years setting

Hurst Court Day Nursery School registered in 2014. The nursery operates from Monday to Friday, from 7am to 6pm, for 51 weeks of the year. There are 20 members of childcare staff, 14 of whom hold relevant early years qualifications at level 3 and above, including five who hold early years teacher status. The nursery provides funded early education for eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Keiley Pedro

Inspection activities

- Leaders and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery to discuss the curriculum and what they want the children to learn.
- The inspector observed the quality of education, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on the children's learning.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and the children.
- The special educational needs coordinator spoke with the inspector about how children with SEND are supported.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the head of early years.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector by email and face to face.
- The inspector talked to staff and the children at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

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.

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