

Inspection of an outstanding school: York Road Nursery School

York Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1XA

Inspection dates: 4 July 2023

Outcome

York Road Nursery School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children have a wonderful time at York Road Nursery School. They are safe and happy because caring staff pay close attention to children's individual needs. Where children ever need it, 'Ebony' the school dog, is quickly on hand to offer a wagging tail and the opportunity for a cuddle.

Every child gets the support they need to thrive. Children have extensive opportunities to explore natural environments, including through forest school. Children quickly become confident communicators. They sustain focus on highly engaging activities. They have a vast range of real experiences, to help them to understand the world. This includes visits from beekeepers and firefighters, which help them develop a deep understanding of learning and prepares them very well for primary school.

Children make highly positive choices to resolve any disagreements. Staff are trained so they can better support children to manage their emotions. Children quickly learn to treat each other with tolerance and respect. They share, take turns and proactively include each other in their play.

Children develop a rich spiritual and cultural understanding by celebrating a wide range of different festivals. Children recently got to experience different foods and types of dress as part of this.

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

Leaders have planned a rich and highly personalised curriculum that covers all areas of learning expected in the early years. This is based on real life experiences and children's interests. Teachers are experts in how young children learn best. Staff know each child in depth. They plan activities carefully so that they meet children's individual developmental needs exceptionally well. Staff draw out opportunities for children to discuss activities in detail, which further develops their understanding and communication skills. They

carefully check what children know, and adapt activities, so that children make very strong progress in their learning and development.

Right from the start, staff help children develop an early love of reading. Children treasure books and listen attentively to a rich range of stories. These help children develop an understanding of language and books. Teachers skilfully plan specific opportunities to develop children's understanding of sounds through exploring the natural world around them and through describing objects in circle time. This helps children become highly confident and independent communicators, as teachers support them to develop a rich vocabulary and expand their thinking. Children leave with the foundations needed for more formal learning of phonics and reading.

Leaders ensure that highly effective identification and support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in place. This starts before children arrive at the school. Extensive communication takes place with families. Children have opportunities to visit the school, on 'play dates', so that teachers can begin the process of assessing their needs, as early as possible. Teachers go to great lengths to find what will best support children to engage with the full curriculum, including therapy, musical activities and sensory support. They skilfully adapt activities, where necessary to support children's differing needs. As a result, children with SEND make exceptional progress with their learning and development.

Adults teach children how they should speak, play and behave with other children. There are high expectations of children's behaviour. Adults gently and skilfully support any children who need help to make the right choices about how to behave. Children understand what is expected and follow routines. This helps ensure children have positive attitudes to learning. It sets them up well for what is expected in primary school.

Children get an extensive range of opportunities for personal development. Staff plan activities carefully over time, that support children's social development, problem solving and development of character highly effectively. Children learn to manage their emotions and can express their feelings confidently. Through 'exploration time' they work together and share their ideas in a highly stimulating outdoor environment. For example, when building a den or obstacle course, they develop understanding of the feelings of others, learn to share ideas and equipment and learn how to work and play with other children.

Leaders support staff workload and well-being effectively. Leaders' work on mindfulness, for example, has been used as a county wide example of best practice. Governors work strategically to challenge and support leaders. Staff value the high-quality training opportunities leaders provide.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive the training they need to be able to identify safeguarding concerns effectively. Appropriate safer recruitment checks are carried out. Governors ensure safeguarding procedures and processes follow the most recent published guidance.

Leaders ensure that any concerns raised by staff are appropriately recorded and followed up. They ensure they work with other agencies, such as the 'family centre', to secure the support needed to keep children safe from harm.

A culture exists where all children have a voice and are listened to.

Background

When we have judged outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in November 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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	117071
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10286247
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	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michael Scott
Headteacher	Diane Frainer
Website	https://yorkroad.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school shares a site with 'Yorkies Day Care'. This provision is inspected separately by Ofsted but is run by the same headteacher.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school provided pre-school provision for 2 and 3 year olds on site. This consists of 12 afternoon places from 12.30 - 3.30pm each day, term time only.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following areas: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and understanding the world. For each deep dive: inspectors spent time gathering first-hand evidence by observing the quality of the daily routines and activities of children and staff. Inspectors also discussed children's development with staff. Much of this was through incidental conversations

prompted by observing the children at play and the interactions between them and adults.

- In addition to meetings with the headteacher and senior leadership team, inspectors met with leaders in the following areas: behaviour and attendance; personal development; safeguarding; and pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met governors to discuss governance.
- Inspectors visited exploration time and the pre-school.
- To gather their views on the school, inspectors spoke with children while they were at play.
- To evaluate the school's safeguarding culture, inspectors viewed safeguarding records and procedures, and met with a range of staff and leaders. Inspectors also examined children's interactions with adults.
- The 36 free-text responses made by parents to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. Inspectors also took account of the 18 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michele Geddes

Ofsted Inspector

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