

Inspection of an outstanding school: Hillfields Nursery School

Clifton Street, Hillfields, Arnside Close Entrance, Coventry, West Midlands CV1 5GR

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2023

Outcome

Hillfields Nursery School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children are very happy at Hillfields Nursery. It is a lovely place for children to start their school experience. Home visits and visits to school by parents and their children take place before children start. This prepares the children well for when they join the school.

Leaders and staff have the highest expectations for all children. They select activities and resources to ensure that children achieve highly. Staff get to know and understand each child. They make strong connections with parents and families. Staff encourage and help parents to support their child at home.

Children behave very well indeed. Staff encourage them to be respectful and kind. Children take notice when staff explain to them how to behave sensibly. They play cooperatively and show obvious care for each other. Unkind behaviour is not tolerated and is dealt with quickly by staff. Children are safe in this vibrant and joyful school.

Staff ensure that children are well prepared for primary school. Every minute counts at Hillfields. Staff gently and patiently show children how to do things. They encourage them to persist, help them to think through problems and challenge them to do more.

Parents value the school's work immensely.

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

Leaders, including governors, have had to make tough financial decisions over the last year. Working with integrity, they have kept the needs of children at the heart of what they do. They are highly ambitious for all children, wanting them all to achieve as well as they can. They ensure that teaching throughout the nursery helps every child to achieve the absolute best outcomes they can. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These children achieve well. Their needs are very quickly identified before they start at the nursery. Their individual plans reflect the strategies and precise next steps that children need next.

The nursery is extremely well led. Leaders ensure that staff are exceptionally well trained. The headteacher and staff work as a strong, effective team. The nursery team meets regularly to discuss what the children need to learn next. The school's motto, 'Enquiring, exploring, learning', is threaded through the curriculum. The curriculum is ambitious. It is enhanced by a well-designed learning environment. Adults ensure there is no ceiling and no limits to what the children can achieve.

Leaders' focus on building children's communication and language skills is striking. Staff use rhymes, songs and activities to engage and inspire children. For example, children used their observation powers to study the life cycle of real butterflies. Adults' questioning helped children to use the word 'chrysalis' with accuracy. Communication is supported by staff teaching children signs and symbols. This enables children to communicate their feelings as well.

Leaders prioritise literacy across the school. They focus on developing children's understanding of stories. For example, listening to books plays a key part in helping children to love books. Children encounter these books in a well-planned and logical way. This helps children to develop a deep understanding of a range of books. In addition, staff read to the children with enthusiasm. Staff's use of resources to help children's understanding of stories is exemplary.

The environment, both indoors and outdoors, is calm and well organised. Children respect each other and show great care. Children are taught to manage their behaviour well. Relationships between adults and children are excellent.

The school's provision for children's personal development is impressive. There are many opportunities for children to develop their wider experiences. Leaders' focus on outdoor learning is an integral part of children's learning. Children enjoyed explaining that they have visitors to school, for example a construction worker who spoke to the children about safety equipment on a building site.

Staff value leaders' investment in them. There has been a reduction in the amount of time and work devoted to the assessment systems. Staff said the headteacher has managed this well. They said that leaders are considerate of their work-life balance. Staff say they feel valued and listened to.

Governors are very effective. They set a clear strategic direction for the quality of education. They support the headteacher and staff very well in implementing plans. Governors know the school and community exceptionally well. They take the future direction and sustainability of the school very seriously.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. They provide staff with regular training to ensure that they can identify any child who may be at risk of harm. Staff know

the right processes to follow if they have any concerns. Leaders are aware of local safeguarding concerns.

All necessary checks are carried out before staff are appointed to work at the school.

Leaders go to great lengths to help families receive the support they need and communicate with outside agencies. The curriculum teaches children about keeping safe. Staff encourage them to speak out if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Background

When we have judged a school to be 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 March 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	103633
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	10257047
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	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Melanie Harvey
Headteacher	Fiona Brinson
Website	www.hillfieldscoventry.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been a restructuring of staff since the previous inspection.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector completed deep dives in communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, and literacy. The inspector held meetings with leaders, visited lessons, reviewed children's progress and spoke with staff and children.
- The inspector met regularly with the headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector spoke to the headteacher and staff about children's behaviour and policies and procedures. The inspector observed children's behaviour.

- The inspector spoke to children, including children with SEND, to hear their views about their education as well as about behaviour and safety.
- The inspector reviewed information about other areas of learning and the wider curriculum.
- The inspector met with some parents and reviewed responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector spoke by telephone with the senior early years adviser from the local authority about the work of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the chair of governors and other governors.
- The inspector spoke with staff and considered their responses to the Ofsted survey.
- The inspector evaluated safeguarding by speaking with leaders, staff, children and parents. She reviewed a sample of leaders' records. The inspector reviewed the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.

Inspection team

Lynda Townsend, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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