

# Inspection of a good school: Heath Lane Nursery School

Heath Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 1TT

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Inspection date: 3 March 2023

## **Outcome**

Heath Lane Nursery School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Children enjoy attending Heath Lane Nursery School. They are happy and safe and develop trusting relationships with staff. This is because adults take time to listen carefully to what children have to say.

Key worker staff get to know their children well. They check routinely what children know and can do. As a result, children develop the important skills that they need to be confident, independent learners.

Children learn to negotiate obstacles and use the well-resourced outside space safely. They take part in a range of activities, such as growing vegetables, learning to whittle and making charcoal. This helps them to take risks while becoming increasingly aware of the physical world around them.

Story time is an exciting event. Children are enthusiastic participants, through role play, and so become familiar with the stories. This means that they can retell them and learn to love them.

Children understand that they are important. They learn about what makes 'me' special and unique.

Children demonstrate good behaviour through their positive actions. They play together happily. Children learn how to share and take turns. They follow instructions from staff well and listen carefully. As a result, they settle into daily routines quickly.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that helps children to become confident and independent learners. Working closely with families, previous settings and external agencies, leaders make sure that the curriculum specifically meets the needs of the children. The curriculum focuses on nurturing children's emotional well-being, as well as

their academic needs. Staff are skilled at recognising when children are likely to become unsettled or overwhelmed. They help them to express their feelings in a positive way so they engage in their learning.

In all areas of learning, leaders have identified carefully the knowledge and skills that they want children to learn and to be able to do. Staff model precisely the skills that children need to know in order to complete a task successfully by themselves. Children learn to follow the steps to use a glue spreader or a pair of scissors correctly. During snack time, children learn to use a knife, pour milk and wash dishes. Consequently, during independent learning, children are productive, behaviour is good, and children maintain their interest for long periods of time.

Staff are skilled at supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They work closely with parents to gain up-to-date information about children's progress and well-being. Leaders ensure that children receive appropriate specialist support so that staff can plan children's next steps with precision. As a result, children with SEND become increasingly confident to 'have a go' at activities so that they achieve well.

Most staff are skilled at teaching the important words that leaders have identified for children to know. However, some staff have not developed the skills and confidence to teach this planned vocabulary well. This means that some children do not have as many opportunities to hear and practise important vocabulary as often as they should.

Staff teach early reading well. They check the sounds that children already know and plan activities that help them to revisit and learn new sounds, in readiness for reading. Parents receive frequent guidance on how to support their children at home, linked to the storybooks children are reading and the vocabulary they are learning. This helps children to develop a love of stories and build their fluency as they learn to read.

Leaders provide children with opportunities to make sense of their place in the world and their community. Children welcome visitors to the school, such as the travelling farm and visits from significant people in their community. They enjoy local walks, visits to the nearby church and celebrating religious festivals.

Partnerships with parents are strong. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's provision.

Governors, leaders and staff are united in their vision to do the best for the children in their care. Staff morale is high. Governors challenge and support school leaders appropriately. Leaders and staff are well placed to carry out the necessary actions to continue to improve the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders work collaboratively with external agencies and specialists to make sure that the

most vulnerable pupils get the support they need quickly.

Children learn how to keep safe. Staff ensure all children can communicate how they are feeling. Children know to say if they feel unsafe.

Staff and governors know the potential safeguarding risks to children in their local community. They know the signs that indicate a pupil may be at risk of harm and how to report concerns promptly.

Leaders carry out all the necessary employment and safeguarding checks on staff and visitors to the school thoroughly.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders' curriculum plans set out the important vocabulary they want children to learn for each area of learning. While most staff are skilled at teaching and modelling the planned vocabulary, a few do not have the necessary skills to do this well. Leaders should ensure that they support all staff to develop this expertise so that all children have frequent opportunities to practise and learn the important vocabulary they need to achieve well.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 good in October 2012.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117070
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10211487
<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	77
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Patrick Aikman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gemma Williamson and Hayley Yendell (Headteachers)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.heathlane.herts.sch.uk">www.heathlane.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There has been a change in leadership since the previous inspection.
- In 2022, Heath Lane Nursery became part of the Roots Federation.

## 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 that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteachers and senior leaders and spoke with staff and children.
- An inspector held a meeting with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development, physical development and literacy. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with senior leaders, observed small-group focused activities, observed child-initiated play and spoke with children's key workers.

- A range of documentation was reviewed, including leaders' school development plans, curriculum plans, the school's single central record of pre-employment checks on staff, school policies and minutes of governor meetings.
- To gather the views of parents, an inspector spoke with several parents at the start of the school day. The inspectors also took account of the 16 responses, including 11 free-text responses, to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors also took account of the 12 responses to Ofsted's online survey for school staff.

### **Inspection team**

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sharon Waldron

His Majesty's Inspector

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