

Henry Allen Nursery School

Mitchell Walk, Amersham, Buckinghamshire HP6 6NW

Inspection dates

7–9 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Governors and senior leaders are ambitious and passionate about making sure that all children achieve exceptionally well.
- Senior leaders have very high expectations of staff and inspire all to give of their very best to ensure that children are happy, settled and eager to learn. There is a palpable culture of ambition and aspiration permeating the whole school community.
- Children thoroughly enjoy their learning experiences. They have extremely positive attitudes to learning and sustain their concentration remarkably well on a very wide range of interesting and stimulating activities.
- Adults know children and their learning needs particularly well. They plan interesting and stimulating activities to motivate, inspire and engage children. As a result, all children make at least typical progress and high proportions make rapid gains in their learning.
- Children behave exceptionally well. They demonstrate very positive attitudes to one another and to the adults in the setting. They listen carefully to instructions and respond immediately to requests. Children show a deep sense of trust and confidence in the adults around them.
- The quality of provision, both inside and outside, is exceptional. Children access all areas of learning through high-quality, inspiring and interesting resources.
- Two-year-old children make rapid progress. The provision in 'The Warren' is stimulating, inclusive and comprehensive. It is suited particularly well to the needs of the youngest children in the setting. The space is calm, inviting and motivating.
- Children in the provision for two-year-olds settle extremely quickly, and happily engage in a wide range of well-planned learning opportunities.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are confident that their children are well cared for and their needs are met exceptionally well.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language, and disadvantaged children make similar progress to other children. Adults meet children's particular needs remarkably well and are acutely aware of the individual support they need.
- Leaders track the progress of all groups of children. However, they are not using this information as fully as they could be to identify how they could provide even better for the different groups children.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Analyse the achievement of different groups of children more precisely and plan effective strategies into development planning to accelerate children's progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- School leaders have been relentless in their desire to bring about rapid improvements in provision since the previous inspection. Despite changes in leadership, all staff share the vision for excellence, and for children to 'have fun and learn through exciting and challenging experiences'.
- Senior leaders have introduced robust systems to check on the progress of individual children. They have ensured that assessments of children's learning and development are accurate. All adults use this information exceptionally well to plan children's next steps, and ensure their individual learning needs are met extremely well.
- Senior leaders regularly meet with teachers and adults with responsibility for key groups of children. They discuss children's progress and identify support for any child who is not making at least typical progress. Additional support is also provided for the most able children to ensure that they make rapid progress.
- Senior leaders have introduced new systems for planning learning activities. All adults work collaboratively to plan an extensive range of interesting and stimulating activities for all groups of children. As a result, all children currently in the nursery are making at least typical progress and in many areas of learning 50% are making exceptional progress from their starting points.
- School leaders ensure that additional funding for the very few children in receipt of early years pupil premium and those eligible for two-year-old funding is used specifically to support the learning and development of these children. It is targeted for each individual extremely well to meet their particular needs. The impact of this additional funding is evident through their enjoyment in learning and their exceptional engagement in individual activities and in group work.
- The executive headteacher has made very effective use of the expertise of staff in Bowerdean and Mapledean Nursery and Children's Centre to develop the work of staff at Henry Allen. Professional development opportunities for all staff are targeted precisely to increase staff skills and provide opportunities for them to develop their own practice. Effective collaboration between the staff of all three settings is significantly enhancing the skills of all adults in the nursery.
- Improvements to the curriculum ensure that the needs and interests of children are at the heart of daily planning for all children's learning. Collaboration with the neighbouring junior school provides opportunities for children to develop independence and learn outdoors in the forest school. Additional enrichment activities, such as learning French and dance, serve to extend children's learning experiences remarkably well.
- School leaders ensure that children's well-being is enhanced because spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences are planned extremely well. Children learn about other cultures, such as their recent exploration and celebration of the Chinese New Year. All adults model British values tremendously well. They provide opportunities to children to make choices and vote. They ensure that children experience awe and wonder, for example in listening to a story about knights and dragons, in the role-play area, while

dressing as knights to act out parts of the story. The very positive relationships between adults and children ensure that children learn to take turns and share. They carefully consider the thoughts and feelings of others.

- School leaders, including governors, know that the information they hold on the attainment and progress of different groups of children is not used as fully as it could be to sharpen school development planning. In particular they are not exploiting it to identify strategies to boost further the achievement for different groups of children to ensure that all make equally outstanding progress.

Governance of the school

- Governance is strong. The governing body acted quickly and decisively to ensure that interim arrangements for the leadership of the school were in place at the start of the year. They are proactive in their approach to secure the long-term stability of leadership in the school.
- Governors carry out their roles and responsibilities with energy, enthusiasm and zeal. They do not take information at face value. They check on the quality of the school's work for themselves, by making regular visits and providing comprehensive reports to the governing body. This enables all governors to be up to date and fully informed. It enables them to provide effective challenge to school leaders.
- Governors ensure that staff performance is managed effectively. Decisions on teachers' pay progression are linked to their performance. Governors have robust procedures in place for the performance management of all staff.
- Governors are reflective and responsive. They actively seek further collaboration and partnerships to secure the long-term future of the nursery. They fulfil their statutory duties extremely well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders are fastidious about ensuring that all safeguarding arrangements are robust. They ensure that all the required checks on adults working in the nursery and visitors to the nursery are carried out effectively.
- Children are taught to think about their own safety and that of other children. Through discussions and specific learning opportunities, children learn about the safe handling of tools and equipment. They understand about keeping safe outside using the large climbing equipment. They show a good understanding that their own actions can sometimes harm or hurt others. Adults demonstrate how to interact and use equipment safely, because they play alongside children and consistently model positive behaviour.
- School leaders have the confidence of parents. All who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, say their child is safe in school. One parent's comment reflected the views of others by saying: 'Henry Allen Nursery School has provided a high quality and caring environment for two of my children and I would recommend it to all parents. The staff are supportive and have been positive role models for my children. They have encouraged and supported my children to learn and investigate the world in a safe environment. I cannot speak highly enough about them.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Adults plan motivating and inspiring learning activities because they have a well-informed knowledge and an excellent understanding of how young children learn. There is a strong emphasis on meeting the learning needs of each individual child. Children's skills are developed through talking about interesting tasks, and providing opportunities for children to develop a range of new skills such as in painting and craft activities. In the provision for two-year-olds, one child displayed an in-depth understanding of the characters from the 'Thomas the Tank Engine' stories. The adult made effective use of this child's interest to explore the colour, number and shape of the engine the child was playing with.
- Children respond very positively to instructions, suggestions and discussions with adults. Routines are well understood by adults and children. Adults use their time very effectively to support children's learning. They interact well with children to increase their understanding of language and develop their learning. Adults play alongside children, encouraging them to explore their surroundings in greater depth and investigate an extensive and stimulating range of activities. As a result, children respond well to the activities on offer and all make typical progress, with high proportions of children making exceptional progress.
- Adults regularly observe and record each child's learning and development. Detailed records, including children's own work, photographs and observational notes, support the assessments adults make. These records are compiled into each child's learning journey which documents their progress and development. Adults use this information extremely well to plan children's next steps. This informs planning for sessions, group work and activities with individual children. The learning journeys are a rich source of information and are shared with parents to help them to follow their own child's learning and development.
- Children are able to freely access learning both inside and outdoors. During outdoor learning, in one adult-led activity, the most able children were excited about recording their achievements as they threw beanbags into various two-dimensional shapes on the grass. The teacher encouraged children to use their hand-eye coordination to accurately throw; their mathematical skills to identify shapes and count; and also to identify which shape held the most beanbags. Children were then encouraged to record the numbers accurately on their papers.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, children who speak English as an additional language and disadvantaged children are supported superbly well. Adults understand their learning needs, plan stimulating and interesting activities and use effective targeted questions to develop their knowledge and increase their understanding. High-quality resources are used to ensure that children's attention is captured and their interest maintained. Nursery staff work closely with parents and specialist agencies to plan individualised programmes specifically suited to each child's needs.
- Adults are particularly adept at developing children's language. This is particularly the case for those children who start in nursery with language skills that are lower than found typically for their age. Adults make very effective use of rhymes and songs to

encourage all children to join in and take part in activities. Singing and musical prompts are used very effectively to help children to understand routines, such as tidying up and washing hands.

- Opportunities for extending children’s learning have recently been introduced in the breakfast club. Children happily eat their breakfast together, sharing their thoughts and ideas about their favourite cereals. Adults use this special time at the start of the day to further develop children’s language and their understanding of their health and well-being. Children develop strong social skills and understand the importance of washing their hands before eating. Adults take every opportunity to extend children’s understanding. For example, they have discussions with children about the sharpness of knives and being careful with them when spreading butter. Children also learn about the differences between plastic and china, for example, and which material would break if it were dropped.
- High-quality storybooks and non-fiction books enhance children’s enjoyment of reading. Adults model reading brilliantly, capturing characters and their actions and bringing stories to life through the use of role play, drama and imaginative discussions. The reading of the story about knights and dragons was highly effective, captivating children’s imagination and enabling them to become engrossed and fascinated by the story.
- Adults help children to learn about the sounds letters make through a range of interesting and fun activities. For example, when writing letters in coloured sand and learning about the initial sounds in words, adults linked the ingredients children were later able to bake in pies. Children thoroughly enjoyed discussing their preferences for the pie filling, before ‘voting with their feet’ and deciding what fruit they would choose to be in their pie. This led to the next exciting activity of rolling out pastry, moulding it into pie tins and adding their preferred ingredient. Children sustained their concentration and were clearly enthralled and excited about the prospect of eating their pies later in the day.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote children’s personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Children are excited and eager to start learning at the beginning of the school day. The arrangements at the start of the day enable children to become more independent. As soon as they arrive, children are encouraged to find their name and display it on the board. Parents are encouraged to stay, if they wish, to settle their child. The range of well-organised and inspiring activities available means that children quickly become engrossed in learning. Adults play alongside children as they begin to explore the new activities on offer to them.
- Children confidently take turns and share learning activities. Any slight conflict of interest is quickly sorted out because adults are highly responsive to children’s learning and play. They encourage children to think about their actions and consider the feelings of those around them. As a result, the nursery is a calm and relaxed

environment when children feel safe and settled.

- Children respond quickly to requests and signals, such as when it is time to tidy the nursery. The use of music and songs, such as, 'Everybody do this, do this, do this' to indicate 'tidy up time' is highly effective. Children know the routines and happily set to work to put resources back in the right place. Adults' effective use of praise encourages children to be diligent and supportive. Together they help each other and enjoy this part of the school day too.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. Children listen carefully to adults and respond quickly. Adults model good behaviour and have very high expectations. Children demonstrate high levels of engagement and sustain their concentration exceptionally well.
- There is a high degree of vigilance regarding attendance. Although children do not have to attend nursery, the school is quick to check why children are not at school. The school has adopted a first-day-calling strategy, if parents have not been in touch to say why their child is not at nursery. Regular attendance is promoted very strongly.
- Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and make positive choices. They are provided with opportunities to think for themselves. Children are encouraged to become more confident in their thinking and consider the thoughts and views of other children in the nursery.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Children begin in the nursery with skills and abilities that are above those found typically for children of their age. All children make at least typical progress and a high proportion of children make rapid progress.
- Children's progress has accelerated in recent years. The proportion of children whose attainment is lower than that typically seen when they leave the nursery has reduced year on year for the last three years.
- Currently, all children are making at least typical progress. A significant proportion of children are making rapid progress from their starting points, particularly in communication and language, and personal, social and emotional development. This is because adults invest a great deal of time talking to children and extending their understanding. The personal development of all children is a high priority.
- The introduction of provision for two-year-olds has had a profound and substantially positive impact on these very young children. In addition, the funded provision for disadvantaged two-year-olds has also had a very positive impact on their learning and development. These children make impressive gains in progress in a short amount of time. The gap between the outcomes for disadvantaged children and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities compared to other children is narrowing. The two-year-olds who continue at the nursery in the provision for three- to four-year-olds continue to make strong progress and settle very quickly in their new class.

- Children who speak English as an additional language settle quickly in their learning and make similar progress to other children. Significant proportions of children make rapid progress, particularly in communication and language and in their personal, social and emotional development. Currently half of the three- to four-year-olds are making very strong progress in these areas of learning.
- The most able children make rapid gains in their learning. Many are secure in their learning, at a standard that is well above what is typical for children of their age. All children are very well prepared for their next stage of learning. Feedback from schools where children attend in the Reception class is very positive. The nursery is highly regarded by other schools in the community.

School details

Unique reference number	110195
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10003579

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Holdsworth
Executive Headteacher	Sue Skinner
Telephone number	01494 726257
Website	www.henryallen.bucks.sch.uk
Email address	office@henryallen.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes of headteacher. During the academic year 2014/15 the current executive headteacher was the consultant headteacher. A new headteacher took up post in September 2015. She left in July 2016. The interim executive headteacher supports the school one day a week; she is also the executive headteacher of Bowerdean Nursery School and Mapledean Nursery School and Children’s Centre. The assistant headteacher manages the day-to-day running of the school.
- The school established provision for two-year-olds in September 2015. Just under half of the children in this provision are eligible for government funding.

- Very few children are eligible for the early years pupil premium.
- There are very few children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- About a third of children speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out over three days. The inspection was led by an Ofsted Inspector on day one. Her Majesty’s Inspector took over the inspection on the afternoon of day two. The inspection concluded at lunchtime on day three.
- Inspectors jointly observed children’s learning with the executive headteacher in all classes and talked to them about their learning on all three days.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher; the assistant headteacher; the leader of the provision for two-year-olds; the special educational needs coordinator; five governors, including the chair of the governing body; and a representative from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documents including children’s learning journeys, attainment and progress information, documents relating to safeguarding, and school policies and procedures.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school development plan, the school’s evaluation of its own performance, and external reports on the school.
- The views of parents were considered through informal discussions at the start of the school day and the 63 responses, including 43 free-text responses, to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Ann Henderson, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Kusum Trikha, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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