

Inspection of Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre

McMillan Street, Deptford, London SE8 3EH

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 March 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Children at this school get an exceptional start to their education. They head straight for their favourite activities as soon as they arrive. Children start the day extremely happy. They are safe and confident moving around the setting. Staff have high expectations for children's learning and behaviour. Routines are well established. These support children to behave and learn extremely well and to work with purpose.

Children keenly explore the school's environment, both indoors and outdoors. The extensive gardens and classrooms are engaging areas that promote children's exploration and curiosity. Through the school's aspirational curriculum, staff skilfully guide children to broaden and develop their interests. This enables children to work with others and take managed risks. The school promotes 53 things it wants each child to experience before they leave. For example, children learn to climb a tree, and they plant a seed and watch it grow. They learn to roast marshmallows safely at a campfire and to tell their own stories to others.

Leaders provide a rich range of opportunities to promote children's broader development, such as taking part in football sessions, woodwork and art projects. The atmosphere of the school is extremely friendly and nurturing. Parents and carers are incredibly positive about the school.

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

The school's curriculum is highly ambitious and very carefully designed to meet the needs of all children. Each aspect of children's learning and development is carefully considered and thought through. Staff understand how young children learn best, which means that they put in place expert support when needed. Often, this involves staff skilfully building on and improving children's answers and questions. Children achieve very well.

Leaders focus on developing children's love of reading. Carefully selected texts help children to tell their own stories in front of their friends. Staff use carefully guided approaches to build children's word knowledge. For example, staff explain clearly to children what new words mean. They encourage children to use these words appropriately. Children enjoy listening to staff read a wide range of well-chosen storybooks and rhymes.

The school makes sure that staff bring the curriculum to life for children, both in the classroom and outdoors. Children learn to be creative and independent. Staff provide well-considered activities that engage children and stimulate their interest and imagination. Staff ably help children to develop key skills and important knowledge. Staff skilfully turn children's interests into activities. For example, opportunities to build towers support children's discussions about where they live and who lives with them, as well as enabling them to count the blocks. Older children support the younger children to achieve and try different activities, such as following recipes in the mud kitchen together. Staff consider very carefully what essential knowledge each child has learned and remembered.

Children are highly focused in their learning. They concentrate for long periods, whether working alone or with their friends, in their play and in staff-led sessions.

Provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is exemplary. Staff are highly skilled at identifying children's specific needs early and putting necessary adaptations in place to enable children to thrive. Children with SEND are given the support they need to join in with all aspects of school life. They access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers and achieve very well.

Children settle quickly at school. This is because leaders and staff take great care in getting to know the children and their families. Children behave impeccably. Leaders ensure that there is a calm atmosphere throughout the school. The school has a meticulous approach to monitoring children's attendance and absences. Where there are instances of low attendance, the school acts swiftly to ensure improvement through the support that it gives to families.

Governors use their skills and experience to provide effective challenge and support to the work of the school. Leaders have created a school where all staff feel proud to work. Staff are complimentary about the school's leadership and say how they wouldn't want to work anywhere else.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	100097
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	10296559
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	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jonathan Sanders
Headteacher	Rachel Hogarth-Smith
Website	www.rachelmcmillannursery.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 January 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre is a maintained nursery school for two- to five-year-old children. Children attend either part time or full time.
- The school has a breakfast club and after-school provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and language, physical development, personal and social development and understanding the world. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with staff, visited classrooms and the garden, spoke to staff and talked with children. The inspectors also considered the curriculum in other areas of learning.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.
- The inspectors spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school and considered their responses to the staff survey.
- The inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also had informal conversations with some parents.

Inspection team

Sarah Lack, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ann Pratt

Ofsted Inspector

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