

Guildford Nursery School

Address: Hazel Avenue, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 1NR

Unique reference number (URN): 133731

Inspection report: 28 April 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Children are thoroughly well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is the case for all children, including disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Children make significant progress from their starting points. The progress they make in their personal, social and emotional development is particularly impressive. This is key to ensuring that children are equipped for successful learning.

Children gain detailed knowledge across all areas of the early years' curriculum. They acquire a reliable knowledge and understanding of early number. Children listen attentively to stories and join in increasingly with songs and nursery rhymes. They clearly develop a love of books.

The school provides a wealth and breadth of exciting and interesting experiences which make a significant contribution to children's learning and development. Children use a wide range of tools and materials, such as paint, wood and modelling clay, with increasing skill to create.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders work effectively with parents and carers to promote the benefits of regular attendance for their children. Consequently, most children attend school regularly. Children's enjoyment of school contributes well to their positive attitudes to learning and eagerness to be in school.

Children thrive in the school's calm, welcoming atmosphere. Furniture and resources are carefully arranged to enable children to move between activities safely and freely. Spaces and activities are organised thoughtfully to ensure that children have opportunities to enjoy some quieter moments amidst the busyness of nursery life. Well-established routines ensure that they feel secure.

Leaders and staff effectively combine high expectations of children's behaviour with sensitive and nurturing support. They know and understand children's needs very well. Staff recognise when children need a little extra help or reassurance and respond to children's emerging needs with warmth and care.

Staff model the good manners and social skills they expect of the children, who copy their lead. Children speak to staff and each other politely and respectfully. They develop friendships, learn the importance of sharing and taking turns and treat each other with kindness.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders and staff take great care to understand each child's precise needs. They welcome and value parents' and carers' views of how well their children are doing and where children may need a little more help. Leaders quickly identify precisely what support each child needs to learn well. They get to know families' circumstances very well, signposting them to sources of advice and offering prompt support where they can help.

Leaders liaise very well with agencies, seeking specialist advice where needed and putting recommendations into practice skilfully. They make excellent use of additional funding to help children to overcome barriers to learning. Leaders ensure that children's interests are central to any decisions made in the school. They provide regular high-quality training to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about children's needs.

Leaders are committed to ensuring that every child thrives, regardless of need or circumstances. They do this extremely well. Regular meetings to discuss children's progress are a well-established part of the school routine. They track children's progress meticulously to ensure that every child continues to thrive. Support plans are used to provide staff with clear information about specific targets, provision and resources that enable children to access the full curriculum.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a deep understanding of the school's work and take effective steps to address any areas which require strengthening. They and their staff have worked extensively to develop the curriculum since the previous inspection. This has ensured that the content is very carefully planned and sequenced across all areas of learning. Leaders and governors make sure that decisions are made in the best interests of children, particularly children with barriers to their learning.

Leaders have already identified the need to ensure that the high-quality practice evident in much of the teaching is embedded consistently across the school. They are aware that they need to continue their work to ensure that this is the case. For instance, they have used ongoing training to ensure a consistent focus on maximising opportunities for children to learn through play. This has already secured notable improvements. Staff appreciate the breadth and depth of training and for the support they are given to develop a career in teaching. Leaders care deeply about staff wellbeing and maintain an atmosphere of teamwork and mutual support. This ensures that staff feel valued and respected.

Governors share leaders' commitment to providing high-quality learning for all children. They use a wide range of strategies to ensure that they are well informed about the school's work, such as external reviews of the school's work and the headteacher's reports to governors. Governors make sure that resources are used appropriately and effectively. They make sure that the governing body complies with its statutory obligations, including its safeguarding responsibilities.

Children's personal development and wellbeing is central to the school's work. The school's personal development programme underpins the curriculum, with opportunities to promote children's wellbeing threaded throughout school life. This ensures that they are equipped with some of the key skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to enjoy life to the full, both now and in the future.

Leaders make sure that the curriculum consistently reflects the needs of the children and their families. They adjust content and approach to ensure that children benefit from high-quality provision. Leaders work closely with parents and carers to support them with important aspects of children's development, such as the best approach to toilet training, or how to support children who are anxious about leaving their parents. The impact of this work is evident in children's wellbeing and sense of self-worth, as well as parents' gratitude for the difference the school has made for their children.

Staff teach children how to learn and play safely. For instance, children learn how to cut up their fruit snacks safely under adult supervision and know that it is important that they wash their hands after using the toilet. Self-care and hygiene routines such as these quickly become a well-established part of daily life and make a significant contribution to children's welfare.

The school provides an extensive range of experiences which capture children's interest very well. Trips and visits, such as a trip to the shops, a bus ride or a visit to the local market, are carefully selected to enhance children's understanding of the world. Leaders make sure that all children can participate in such activities, particularly disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school promotes fundamental British values effectively in an age-appropriate way. For example, children learn about different cultures and beliefs and understand that others may have different views to their own. Leaders take great care to provide books and toys which ensure that every child feels represented and valued.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The school places children's interests at the heart of learning. Leaders have developed the curriculum very well since the previous inspection. The content is clearly identified and carefully sequenced. The school's ambitious curriculum provides children with broad, balanced and rich experiences of learning, both indoors and out. Leaders keep a close check on the quality of teaching. As a result, they know what is working well and where further developments are needed.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is a fundamental part of the school's work. This ensures that children develop important skills which are key to successful learning and to their enjoyment of school. Early literacy and number skills are taught well.

Staff supervise children carefully. They teach them how to use the nursery equipment safely, such as the climbing frame and the woodwork tools.

Most teaching supports children's learning very effectively. For example, staff skilfully adjust activities to ensure that all children, including for those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, can access the full curriculum successfully. Sometimes, however, staff are not clear enough about precisely what they intend children to learn through each activity. This means that opportunities are missed to promote key knowledge and vocabulary.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Children are very happy to come to this welcoming and nurturing school. They are keen to get started when they arrive and are warmly welcomed by caring staff. Children are greeted by a wide range of engaging activities and experiences. For instance, they have regular opportunities to make clay models, climb on the play equipment, search for minibeasts and join in with songs and rhymes. Activities such as these are used well to support children's learning and development across all areas of learning. There is something of interest for everyone. As a result, children are soon settled into the gentle rhythms and routines of the school day. They enjoy learning and attend very well. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

Staff get to know children and their families well. They keep a careful eye on children's wellbeing and provide effective support for any who may be feeling anxious. As a result, children feel safe and valued. They behave extremely well. Staff resolve occasional differences between children quickly and with kindness and sensitivity.

Children achieve well from their different starting points, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others who have barriers to learning. Children make rapid progress across all areas of learning and are very well prepared for Reception Year by the time they leave. The school prepares children well for life in modern Britain. For instance, they learn how to play and learn alongside others and grow rapidly in confidence and self-esteem. Children learn about the local community and the wider world through a series of carefully selected trips and experiences.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should continue to ensure that the school's high-quality professional learning programme drives improvements in teaching.
 - Leaders should continue their work to ensure that staff know precisely what they intend children to learn through each activity, so that opportunities to promote key knowledge and vocabulary are maximised.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Andy Bagwell.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other members of staff. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector met with members of the board of governors, including the chair.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school operates on 2 sites approximately 2 miles apart. Hazel Avenue is in a residential area and York Road (York Road, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4DU) is close to the town centre. The separate family centre provision was not part of this inspection.

The school offers breakfast and tea clubs at both sites.

The school has two separate early years registrations for children aged under two. This provision is inspected separately.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Sally Cave

Lead inspector:

Julie Sackett, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Deirdre Crutchley, Ofsted Inspector

Matt Batchelor, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 28 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

182

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

9.2%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.65%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

18.13%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright