

Themes from recent Ofsted inspections for Early Years in Schools in Gloucestershire



Taken from Ofsted inspections of Schools in Gloucestershire - Summer Term 2017-2018

The statements are ordered under general themes and some statements could go under more than one heading.

Leadership and Management - staff development, supervision, self-evaluation, staff deployment

- Leadership in the kindergarten and in the Reception classes is strong and provides clear direction for all adults working in the early years provision. Staff comment on the strong team spirit and the high degree of trust that exists between them. As a result, staff communicate well with each other and they are well motivated.
- Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Leaders are aware that a small number of disadvantaged children are not on track to reach a good level of development. They are taking steps to improve the progress of this group.
- Leaders ensure that all children are kept safe and they learn how to keep themselves safe. Staff are well trained and vigilant. All welfare requirements in the early years are fulfilled.
- Leadership in early years foundation stage within the school is good. The leader has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement. A robust action plan is in place to tackle weaknesses. Leaders have identified relevant actions to improve provision, teaching and learning and assessment as well as outcomes.
- All safeguarding and welfare requirements meet statutory requirements. Staff are well qualified and have the necessary experience and expertise to deliver good teaching and sustain improving outcomes for children and their families.
- Leadership and management of the early years is strong. The early years leader works very effectively with the Reception teacher. Together, they sustain strong safeguarding and welfare procedures to keep children safe.
- The early years provision is well led and managed. The leader has an accurate view of the strengths of the provision and where further improvement is needed to ensure that all children make rapid progress. Staff have regular opportunities to develop their skills through training and working with consultants from the trust and external agencies.
- Good attention is paid to safeguarding and welfare, so that children are kept safe both in class and outdoors. Staff ensure that children who have SEN and/or disabilities and others considered vulnerable receive well-targeted teaching to maximise progress. Disadvantaged children develop their speaking and listening skills well by working with a specialist consultant, followed by good support from school staff.

Routines/Independence/Behaviour

- Children's behaviour is good. Staff model routines and rules well. Children are polite to each other and to adults. In the kindergarten they happily share toys and equipment with each other. Children in Reception cooperate well with each other when they are playing.
- Relationships are good. Teachers and additional adults interact well with children and have fostered their personal and social development. As a result, they cooperate well with each other to develop positive behaviours. The children are confident and self-assured as well as being independent in their learning. They are also being taught how to resolve their own difference, when and if they arise.

- Children's behaviour is calm and focused. They quickly develop positive attitudes to learning, because of the well-established routines. They enjoy warm relationships with staff and with each other, showing great curiosity and delight in their learning.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

- Assessments are precise and accurate. The teacher uses information well to plan the next steps of learning for the children. This ensures that individual progress is strong.
- Leaders check the children's stage of development efficiently to secure an accurate understanding of the different needs of children entering this new school each year. This underpins their secure ability to provide and, as necessary, adapt the learning experiences provided for the children to maintain their good progress. As a result, pupils across the range of ability, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are well supported.

Teaching and Learning

- Most children enter the early years with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. They make good progress. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception Year has been above average and rising for the past three years.
- Teaching is effective in the early years. Staff are adept at developing children's confidence and independence. For example, when playing a collaborative game, 'duck, duck, goose', staff initially modelled the activity and then gradually withdrew to let the game run without their help.
- The early years curriculum fires children's imaginations and motivates them. Children were excited when they were asked to set a trap for some pirates who had stolen the rings from the royal wedding. Staff link these experiences to learning effectively.
- Indoor and outdoor activities provide a lot of scope for children to investigate, explore and find things out for themselves. For example, children throughout the early years find out about nature through forest school sessions on the school site
- The teacher, along with the additional adults who support the children, has a clear understanding of the learning needed to ensure that children make good progress. However, at times teachers are not always focusing on transference of phonics skills into wider range of opportunities to write during these sessions.
- Outcomes at the end of 2017 improved and are above national averages, especially in reading and writing. Current assessments and a scrutiny of children's work demonstrate that these aspects of learning, along with mathematics, are being maintained. Children continue to do well and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Teaching for the least able children in the Reception class is strong. These children are given well-considered activities to extend their understanding. Bespoke teaching and learning for developing social and emotional aspects of learning as well as communication and language skills of current pupils are successful. These children are making strong progress. However, the most able children do not reach the highest standards across all of the different areas of learning.
- Children sustain their learning focus for long periods of time. They maintain positive learning attitudes and enjoy their time in school. As a result, they are making strong progress.
- Staff ensure that the resources and activities provided for the children, both in and out of doors, support learning effectively. The combination of stimulating experiences, such as investigating a sea creature topic as well as carefully-planned teaching of phonics, helps children to progress well in their learning.
- The starting points of children currently in Reception are higher than those found in previous years. However, some children initially lacked self-confidence when learning with others. Caring staff have addressed this aspect successfully to the degree that children now make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
- The quality of teaching learning and assessment is good. The rigour of staff in establishing clear routines and high expectations underpins the children's excellent behaviour and relationships with each other and the staff. These are evident in the confident way that children show good levels of independence and willingly share ideas and learn well together.

- Children listen well to the teacher's and teaching assistant's carefully considered questions. Most respond well and are increasingly thinking more deeply about their learning activities. For example, during the inspection children were encouraged to research using books to find out how many legs they should put on their drawings of an octopus. As a result, children make good progress in developing their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Children show good phonic knowledge and understanding when attempting to read new words. They also understand that some words begin with capital letters and know their number bonds up to 20. Although much improved this year, at times when recording their work, a small number of children are prone to reverse their numbers and form letters incorrectly. Even so, an above-average proportion of children achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception and are well prepared for the transition to Year 1.
- Most children start the Reception Year with the knowledge and skills typical for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning from their starting points. Consequently, they enter Year 1 as confident learners, with the skills and understanding typical for their age.
- Teaching is effective, and children benefit from well-planned activities that are based on the accurate assessment of their prior knowledge and understanding. Staff check children's progress carefully and adjust activities to meet individual needs.
- Teaching activities are designed to spark children's interests and imagination. For example, children are enthralled when finding 'dinosaur' eggs in the classroom, inspiring them to write imaginative stories about the event.
- Mathematics development is strong, and most children are challenged effectively. Children develop their understanding of patterns in shapes well when they have opportunities to build 'dinosaur caves'.
- Phonics teaching underpins the development of early reading and writing skills well. Handwriting is taught effectively, and children soon become proficient in forming letters correctly and spelling common words.
- Children also learn from following their own interests, and staff support them capably to develop their language skills as they play. However, sometimes the activities do not provide sufficient challenge for the most able children to extend their learning further.

Environment / Outdoor Learning

- The leader and teaching assistant are very well trained and utilise good-quality professional development to improve the provision for the children continually. They collaborate well together to create a warm, conducive and stimulating environment for learning. However, the outdoor area is not routinely used well to promote good learning. This is being tackled through current plans.

Partnership

- Parents enjoy positive relationships with staff and are closely involved in the life of the school. They praise the effective arrangements for starting school that enable children to settle quickly and happily. They say they are well informed about how their children are doing and feel confident to ask staff questions about their child's learning at any time.
- The teachers and teaching assistant maintain excellent links with parents, which supports the children's introduction to full time schooling and continued enjoyment of school. Staff provide parents with good guidance to support children's productive learning at home. Parents who spoke to the inspector praised the way that staff respond to their views and keep their children safe.
- Leaders and staff have formed strong and trusting relationships with parents, carers and families. Parents regularly contribute to the learning journals of the children and provide detailed outcomes of achievement of their children. These are used in the assessments carried out by the teacher.
- Staff engage well with parents and families. They share information regularly through an online system. Parents are invited into school for workshops and events to learn about their child's education. Parents are pleased with the early years provision and have great confidence in its leadership. They were very keen to tell inspectors about the positive experiences of their children.