

Early Years @ Highfield Daycare

Unique reference number (URN): EY337155

Address: Highfield Nursery School, Chesterfield Drive, IPSWICH, IP1 6DW

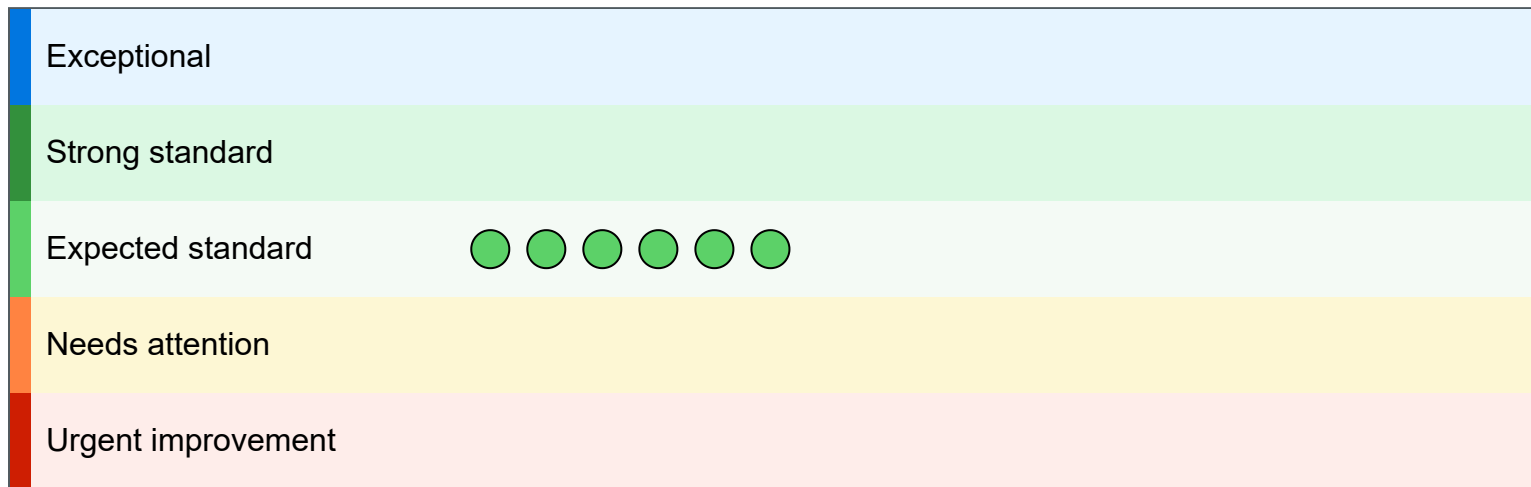
Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 03/01/2007

Registers: EYR, CCR, VCR

Registered person: Highfield Children's Centre

Inspection report: 15 January 2026



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, children are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Children develop age-appropriate knowledge and skills across all areas of learning. They are confident to explore unfamiliar experiences and show enjoyment in their play and learning. Children build early mathematical understanding through everyday routines and develop their physical skills through active play, balancing and large movements. They listen attentively to familiar stories and join in with repeated phrases, which helps them remember and use new language.

Children who face barriers, including disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, benefit from targeted support that helps them take part and make progress. Children are prepared for their next stages of learning with a focus in the setting of supporting children to participate in group activities and the ability to listen and attend well. However, some inconsistencies in the quality of staff interactions mean that children are not yet achieving secure depth and breadth of knowledge in all 7 areas of learning.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Expected standard 

Children behave well and show positive attitudes to learning. They are kind to one another, engage readily in play and are increasingly able to resolve minor conflicts with less adult support. Staff build calm, respectful relationships with children and provide reassurance when children need comfort. Generally, children follow daily routines and boundaries well, which helps the setting feel orderly and welcoming. High-quality staff interactions, particularly during group times, would further consistently embed this. Leaders have recently further expanded their emotional curriculum using the 'Colour Monster' book to further develop children's understanding of their emotions.

Children who find it harder to regulate their emotions or join group activities are supported through carefully planned strategies. For example, staff provide additional adult guidance and spaces for physical movement, which helps children to manage strong feelings more safely. Leaders work with families and external professionals when concerns emerge and help parents to understand and use shared approaches at home.

Leaders work flexibly with families to ensure regular and consistent attendance. This helps children to understand and follow routines well.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Children's care needs are met well. Staff are attentive and responsive, supporting children sensitively when they need reassurance and promoting hygiene routines through daily practice. Children learn about healthy choices through activities and conversations, such as discussing toothbrushing and talking about food during play. For example, adults and children talk about the hidden sugars in tomato sauce during role play.

Children's emotional wellbeing is supported through warm relationships and consistent care. Staff help children to name feelings and develop ways to manage emotions. Leaders and staff also work with families when children's circumstances change, helping parents to access timely support and ensuring that children receive consistent guidance across home and the setting.

Role play is used to promote children's uniqueness and individuality. Children talk about their differing needs and enquire as to others. For example, they discuss being 'gluten free'.

Consistent routines mean children know what to expect next and have a clear understanding of boundaries and how to keep themselves safe. However, consistent high-quality staff interactions would further embed children's knowledge. Children have ample opportunities to be physically active and enjoy being outside. For example, they enjoy riding trikes collaboratively and safely in the outside garden.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff offer a curriculum that reflects children's interests while introducing purposeful experiences that build early knowledge and skills. The environment supports children to explore stories, role play and practical activities. Staff plan opportunities that promote children's physical development and independence, including pouring drinks, using tools and managing personal care routines. The curriculum is well designed to cover all areas of learning and has a clear intent.

Staff support children's early mathematical understanding through everyday routines, such as counting how many chairs are needed at lunchtime and using counting strategies in group sessions. Staff also prioritise experiences that strengthen children's fine motor development, such as using tweezers, tools and mark-making opportunities.

Teaching is not implemented consistently across the setting. While some staff skilfully respond to children's ideas, engage them in meaningful conversations and support them to collaborate and resolve minor conflicts, others do not routinely build on children's emerging thinking to extend learning further. For example, some staff do not engage children while they play alongside and others do not extend children's thinking by commenting or posing thoughtful questions. Leaders have begun to address this through professional development and coaching. However, these approaches are not yet embedded well enough to ensure that all children experience consistently high-quality interactions that enable them to achieve more.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff identify children's needs through observations, baseline information and focused checks, alongside regular discussions with families. They act quickly to reduce barriers to learning. Staff work with parents and professionals to plan and review support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with emerging communication needs and children who find it harder to join group activities. Children benefit from reasonable adjustments, such as targeted adult support at key points in the day and alternative, related tasks when children need help to regulate.

The setting supports families well, including those who speak English as an additional language. Parents describe being helped to understand their child's learning and to access external services. Leaders also recognise that family circumstances can affect children's wellbeing at times, such as school holidays, and they put additional support in place to help children and families manage these periods more positively.

Leaders use additional funding with children's interests and needs in mind. They are building resources and approaches to help disadvantaged children engage more confidently and develop their communication.

Leaders use training well to support them to use the graduated approach and are working towards ensuring that effective teaching and interactions with all children make a demonstrable difference.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

There have been changes to leadership, with new managers leading the day-to-day running of the setting and receiving support from senior leaders. Several staff members have taken on new leadership roles, and there is a clear plan of support in place as staff members transition into their new roles. This is still being embedded.

Leaders are ambitious for children and invest in professional development. They use information they gather from observations of staff practice to feed into planned professional development to strengthen the team's knowledge and skills.

Staff describe feeling well supported and able to raise concerns. Staff are included in decision-making, with their thoughts and reflections considered. Leaders ensure that staff training is kept up to date, including paediatric first aid, and staff demonstrate secure knowledge of safeguarding processes and reporting routes.

Leaders work with families and external services to help children who need additional support. They act swiftly to access support for families. This ensures that children's needs are met quickly. Leaders plan resources and staffing suitably. They use extra funding wisely to support disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to thrive.

Leaders are beginning to analyse the setting's strengths and areas of improvement and use this to strengthen how they develop staff who are newer to their roles, including apprentices, through mentoring and more formal support when required.

✔ **Compulsory Childcare Register requirements**

This setting has met the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register.

How we check if a provider meets the requirements of the Compulsory Childcare Register

When we check if settings meet the Compulsory Childcare Register requirements, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met
 - Not met
-

✔ **Voluntary Childcare Register requirements**

This setting has met the requirements of the voluntary part of Childcare Register.

How we check if a provider meets the requirements of the Voluntary Childcare Register

When we check if settings meet the Voluntary Childcare Register requirements, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met
 - Not met
-

What it's like to be a child at this setting

Children arrive happily and settle quickly. They are greeted warmly by staff, which helps them feel safe and valued. Children show confidence to share their ideas and include others in play. They enjoy a story-based curriculum that captures their interests, such as exploring 'animals' trapped in ice, cleaning giant teeth with shaving foam and role playing in the home corner. These experiences help children develop early knowledge and vocabulary, as well as their fine motor control and physical skills.

Children greatly enjoy exploring in the large, well-resourced outdoor space, working on their coordination and cooperation skills. For example, children giggle and navigate tight spaces as they work together riding trikes on a makeshift course.

Children who face barriers to learning and/or wellbeing receive thoughtful support. Staff work closely with families, including those who speak English as an additional language, to ensure that they can access information and external services. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from adults who know them well and adjust routines sensitively. For example, staff help children to join group times when they can, while also providing alternative, linked activities when children need space to regulate.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen practitioners' skills in responding to children's emerging thinking so that teaching consistently extends children's learning and enables them to achieve more.
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About this inspection

The inspector spoke with leaders, practitioners, the special educational needs coordinator and apprentices during the inspection.

We carried out this inspection under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the early years foundation stage.

A quality assurance visit by an additional inspector was carried out at this inspection.

Inspector:

Suzie Squirrell-Hughes

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): EY337155

Address:

Highfield Nursery School
Chesterfield Drive
IPSWICH
IP1 6DW

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 03/01/2007

Registered person: Highfield Children's Centre

Register(s): EYR, CCR, VCR

Operating hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 08:00 - 18:00

Local authority: Suffolk

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 15 January 2026

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

2 to 4

Total number of places

24

Our grades explained

Exceptional ●

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

Strong standard ●

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

Expected standard ●

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

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