

Little Downsend Ashtead

Unique reference number (URN): 2757977

Address: Downsend School Pre Prep Ashstead, 22 Oakfield Road, Ashtead, KT21 2RE

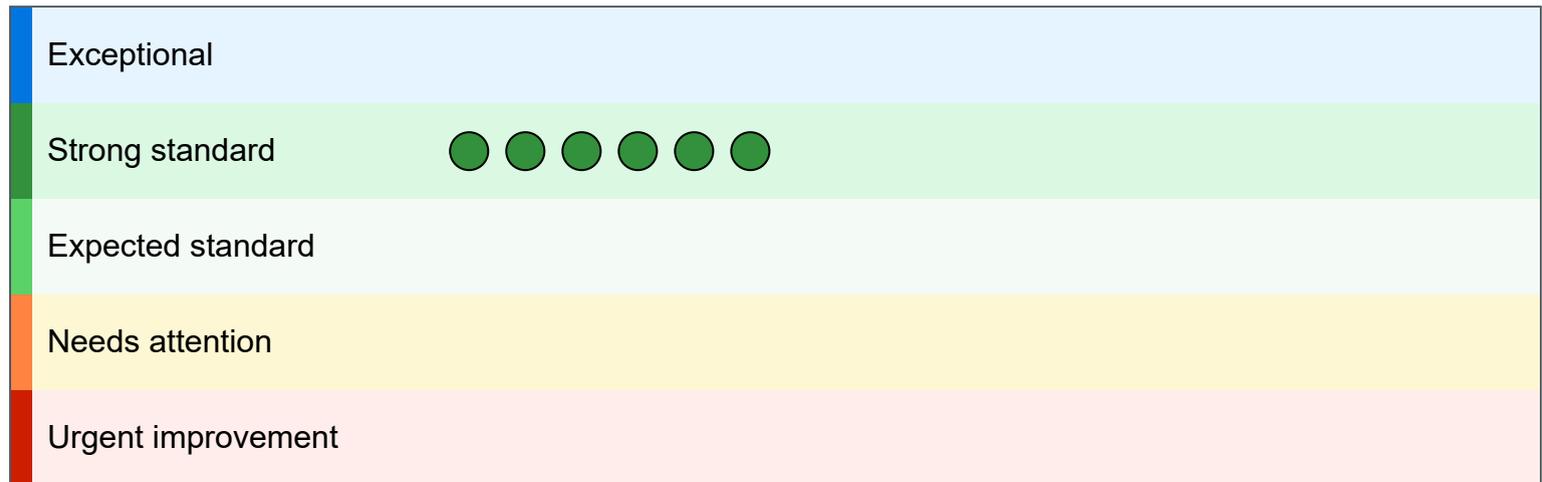
Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 19/09/2023

Registers: EYR

Registered person: Cognita Schools Limited

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.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Children are making remarkable progress that is consistent throughout the setting. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are being closely monitored during their settling period. Children are well equipped for their next stage and leave the setting with solid foundations for future learning. The staff have a comprehensive understanding of child development, which supports their planning and there are robust foundations for the development of children's speech. Throughout the day, children are exposed to a wealth of songs, rhymes, stories and meaningful interactions and conversations that are connected to their learning.

Children of all ages demonstrate a strong determination to succeed. They maintain excellent levels of focus and enjoyment in their activities, clearly displaying their understanding of daily routines. The setting encourages a sense of independence among the children. For instance, in the baby room, children are encouraged to develop their physical strength. They are motivated to pull themselves up to a standing position and reach out to investigate objects of interest. Children express happiness and enthusiasm when they achieve. They are eager to celebrate the victories and accomplishments of their friends.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Strong standard ●

All staff have consistently high expectations for children's behaviour and attitudes to learning. Children across all age groups demonstrate exemplary behaviour. The inspiring environment provided for children, along with the nurturing staff who guide and assist children, supports them in managing their emotions and feelings. Children receive exceptional support in recognising their feelings and putting this into words. For instance, staff in the baby room begin with simple modelling among themselves to illustrate to children the concept of turn-taking. As children move through the setting and gain confidence in their language abilities, they are encouraged to express their feelings and verbally explain to others the reasons behind their emotions.

Children demonstrate their happiness, contentment and eagerness to attend the setting. Individualised settling-in procedures are designed to meet the needs of both parents and children, fostering the development of strong relationships and mutual trust. This is evident in the inspiring connections that children form with staff, as they share laughter, engage in

play and seek comfort through hugs. Staff collaborate closely with parents to encourage children's punctuality and attendance. For instance, when children are absent and cannot attend the setting for extended periods, leaders reach out to parents and organise video calls, allowing children to remain a part of the setting and participate in story times with their peers.

Established routines allow children to transition smoothly and without interruption to their play. For instance, when the youngest children return from outdoor play, they demonstrate independence in removing their outdoor clothing, with assistance from staff, and transition effortlessly to the activities prepared for them.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The welfare and wellbeing of children are given a high priority. A well-structured and highly effective key-person system supports all children in developing secure attachments. Staff emphasise the importance of forming strong relationships with parents from the outset. This supports staff to connect with new children and fully understand their unique needs and preferences. Staff work with parents from the start to understand children's development and plan tailored next steps quickly. Leaders and staff have secure knowledge of children's individual needs and family circumstances. They demonstrate a secure understanding of all the children, their diverse needs and family dynamics.

Across the setting, children who have only recently started attending demonstrate their contentment and happiness. For instance, during sensory play in the baby room, children who are new to the setting feel confident to reach out to investigate new textures, knowing they have the support of their key person nearby. Care routines are thoughtfully designed to avoid interrupting the children's play and learning experiences. Mealtimes are meticulously organised to ensure that children are safe and supervised. The youngest children have their food prepared how they do at home and parents provide photos to support staff to understand what stage of eating children are at.

Staff fully support all children to understand that their physical development, oral health and personal safety are fundamental to their overall health and wellbeing.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders and staff are motivational and ensure that every child receives a high-quality, well-structured curriculum. Every staff member is dedicated to addressing the unique needs of each child, adapting teaching strategies and methods accordingly. For instance, the youngest children investigate the forest area and enjoy activities that focus on their communication and mathematical skills. Children eagerly dig in the mud for insects, discover how to use binoculars and begin to relate the toy birds to the real birds they observe in the garden. Whereas older children receive effective teaching and support to actively identify the birds they encounter and learn about the changing seasons. All children are encouraged to connect new knowledge with what they have learned before. Children are highly motivated to share learning and ideas with their peers.

Outside, all children thrive. Younger children are encouraged to explore and learn to take safe risks while developing their physical abilities, expressing sheer delight at the sensation of rain on their faces. Meanwhile, older children demonstrate remarkable resilience as they collaborate to build structures, propose ideas and invite their friends to participate. They demonstrate maturity by inventing new games and establishing rules and boundaries. Children experience lasting enjoyment in all activities due to an inspiring environment that not only meets their needs but also presents challenge.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

All children demonstrate a strong sense of belonging in the setting's inviting and inclusive environment. Leaders and staff have created a nurturing and safe space, where every child is able to learn and achieve their full potential. Staff use their secure knowledge and understanding of each child to design personalised support. Through efficient settling-in visits and continuous communication with parents, the staff gain insight into children's home environments. The positive relationships forged with parents and other professionals ensure that strategies implemented to reduce barriers in children's learning are both consistent and highly effective.

The exceptionally skilled workforce, supported by the inspiring leadership team, show dedication to modify and adapt their teaching methods to ensure that all children can fully engage with the curriculum. For example, they closely observe the progress of children and look for patterns and trends. This information subsequently filters into the curriculum and individual planning for each child. Staff are skilled at making timely referrals to agencies and quickly incorporate the advice of specialist professionals. For example, staff use picture references to guide children in understanding the routines and what is happening next in the day. These are also shared with parents to provide complete consistency with implemented strategies. The staff's approach to reducing barriers to children's learning is highly impactful, consistent and swift and, as a result, all children thrive.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

The highly motivated and proactive leadership team encourages the staff to provide the best opportunities for every child. This includes children who face barriers to their learning. Leaders possess a comprehensive understanding of the setting's context. They are actively involved and have an exceptional knowledge of the children, parents and staff. Leaders are fully aware of the dynamics within the setting, and, therefore, they pursue continuous improvement to uphold and enhance the already high standards. Regular reflection with staff, parents and children ensures that everyone's voices are heard and considered.

The staff express profound admiration for the leadership team. They feel appreciated, inspired and heard, and have a clear understanding of their individual objectives. The staff demonstrate remarkable motivation to consistently pursue improvement and enhance their skills to guarantee the delivery of the highest quality care and education.

Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of their community and endeavour to offer children valuable experiences and opportunities. For instance, after reading a story about a goat driving a bus, pre-school children expressed an interest in buses. In response, leaders

organised a bus ride to further engage the children's interests. Furthermore, leaders effectively inspire staff, children and parents to get involved in initiatives that emphasise healthy eating, sustainability and recycling.

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

Children flourish at this welcoming, inclusive and inspiring setting. They are offered excellent opportunities and experiences that enhance the curriculum while also addressing their immediate needs in personal learning and development. Children are exceptionally joyful, having built strong and enduring relationships with their peers and key person. Children embrace challenges and thrive on the praise and recognition they are given when they achieve. Children show kindness and compassion for their friends and behave impeccably.

From the moment children arrive, they show excellent levels of self-motivation and a passion for learning that will ideally prepare them for their future education. They illustrate that they experience a sense of safety and security, accompanied by remarkable levels of wellbeing and a strong desire to succeed. Children show genuine enthusiasm for the carefully planned and organised activities made available to them. Additionally, the setting promotes an atmosphere, where children can build upon their learning, children show enjoyment as they recount stories with the aid of small-world props and illustrate parts of the story with remarkable detail.

All children are regarded as unique individuals. The staff recognise that each child arrives at the setting with varying levels of ability and life experiences, which can influence their wellbeing and development. Nevertheless, through highly effective settling-in visits, thorough monitoring, consistent and effective relationships with parents and a skilled workforce, activities are thoughtfully adapted to ensure that all children receive the support they need to participate in their learning, at the setting and beyond.

Children are provided with a comprehensive curriculum that acknowledges and honours their unique lives and personal experiences. For instance, parents dedicate their time to visit and share their cultures and professions with the children, allowing them to gain insights about others in the community of the setting. The thoughtfully designed and inspiring environment subsequently motivates children to delve deeper into their learning as they engage in role playing as veterinarians and police officers. Well-organised trips within the local community further enhance children's understanding of their immediate surroundings and the broader world beyond.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain their work to ensure continued improvement and high standards. They should focus on creating a transformational impact on the outcomes and experiences of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing.
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About this inspection

The inspector spoke with leaders, practitioners, the special educational needs coordinator, parents and children 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:

Kelly Southern

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): 2757977

Address:

Downsend School Pre Prep Ashstead
22 Oakfield Road
Ashtead
KT21 2RE

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 19/09/2023

Registered person: Cognita Schools Limited

Register(s): EYR

Operating hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 07:45 - 18:00

Local authority: Surrey

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

0 to 4

Total number of places

65

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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Textphone: 0161 618 8524

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