

St John's Nursery Playgroup, Wayside

Unique reference number (URN): 2752377

Address: Wayside Jubilee Centre, Wayside, Potters Bar, Herts, EN6 5NE

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 06/09/2023

Registers: EYR

Registered person: St. John's Methodist Church, Potters Bar

Inspection report: 4 March 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, 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 ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Supporting vulnerable children and inclusion are a real strength of the setting. Staff go above and beyond to ensure all children are included and able to take part fully. They know their children well, quickly identify any barriers to learning and adapt the environment, routines and learning to meet their needs. Strategies such as Makaton signs, visual prompts and small-group work support children's communication and confidence, and staff work closely with parents and other professionals so children get the help they need and make steady progress.

Staff lead carefully planned interventions for all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They benefit from specialist sessions, such as Lego therapy, which support their listening skills and communication and language. As a result, children are engaging more positively and sustaining attention for longer periods of time. This support is monitored so they can refine targets and implement further strategies to help narrow gaps for children who need additional support so they achieve the best possible outcomes from their starting points.

Leaders and managers take on advice and skilfully adjust next steps and the environment to meet children's individual needs. They use funding appropriately to ensure children have the specific resources they need to access nursery every day.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

All children are making steady progress from their starting points. Effective strategies are helping children to become confident communicators. Children sign, gesture and benefit from visual prompts, and staff are effective role models and often repeat words and use new vocabulary that children are grasping and using in their play. Children develop a love of reading through engaging story times and have developed a repertoire of songs that they sing and play instruments along to enthusiastically.

Children with barriers to learning are included, and learning is personalised to their needs. However, children sometimes need further support to help them play more collaboratively. Children are excited to share what they have learned and can do and respond to praise with smiles as they share their achievements.

Children are developing independence and resilience to prepare them well for the next stage of education. Close links to schools and key experiences mean children generally gain the skills they need for their future learning.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Expected standard 

Children understand the boundaries of the setting. They follow the routine and instructions well, washing their hands before snack, lining up for group time and wearing their special teacher lanyard for tidy-up time. They work collaboratively alongside their peers to build towers and use the climbing frame. Staff create a respectful environment where children feel secure and valued. Children go to key workers for reassurance, regulation and to talk about how they are feeling.

Children demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning, and staff support behaviour well overall, encouraging independence and their own ideas. However, staff do not always consistently implement a range of strategies to manage children's behaviour positively. Staff consistently encourage attendance and punctuality and have clear procedures in place to ensure children attend nursery regularly.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Staff build positive relationships with the children in the setting, helping them to feel a sense of belonging. Children and their attachments are an important part of the nursery's approach, and staff take time to get to know families so they can support self-care routines and adapt them when needed. Children are happy to come into nursery and separate from their parents with increasing confidence.

Leaders and managers ensure inductions and settling-in routines are tailored to each child and meet their individual needs. Staff share regular feedback so parents are informed about their child's day. Children's physical development is planned for, and they benefit from large climbing equipment, bikes and scooters in the outdoor area. Staff support children's understanding of healthy lifestyles. Children take part in themed healthy weeks, where they talk about healthy eating and enjoy local walks to learn about road safety and the world around them.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders plan an ambitious curriculum that reflects their children's starting points. They know the areas they would like to improve and work as a team to reflect and adjust the planning. They have a clear vision and ethos for what they want children to learn and design their curriculum and environment collaboratively to suit their children's needs. The areas and zones that have been created are planned to ensure children can explore all areas of learning.

Staff plan key activities that broaden children's horizons and expose them to new experiences, which contribute positively to their attitudes towards learning. Children are keen to print their own ladybirds, talking about shapes, colours and counting spots. Children have the freedom to explore, and staff differentiate by outcome so children can achieve.

Staff prioritise outdoor learning and have created an inviting outdoor space where children can climb into the sandpit and scoop, dig and pat sand to create sandcastles. Children enjoy mixing and stirring in the mud kitchen and collect their own water from the water butt. Staff

guide children's play and support them to develop their own ideas through interactions, although this is not always as effective in all areas of learning.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and managers are passionate and dedicated. They strive to support all children, particularly the most vulnerable and those with special educational needs. They identify areas of strength with confidence and are honest about areas that can be improved. They are successful in driving forward improvements that have the greatest impact on children's learning and wellbeing. There have been many recent changes that have been managed well, and plans for future improvements are progressing appropriately.

Leaders and managers ensure that there are strong partnerships with parents. They communicate well with families, creating links between home and nursery so children can thrive. They champion the children in their care, making referrals and seeking support from outside agencies to enhance provision for children who face barriers to learning.

Staff feel well supported by their managers. They meet regularly to reflect and discuss their practice and identify where support is needed to help them develop professionally. However, leaders and managers need to provide further support and guidance for all staff to confidently manage children's behaviour with a range of strategies.

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

Children are welcomed into a warm, homely and inviting environment where they feel safe, valued and ready to learn. The spaces staff provide reflect all areas of learning and children's interests, with carefully organised zones that encourage them to explore and make choices. Staff share responsibility for planning and focus closely on their key children, ensuring learning is personalised and builds on what children already know and can do. This helps children feel understood and supports them to make effective progress from their starting points.

Beneficial caring bonds and relationships are a real strength of the setting. Staff prioritise getting to know the children and their families well so they can support their individual needs. The routine and structure of the day are clear and consistent. Children benefit from this predictability, knowing what is coming next and feeling secure in their environment.

Children show positive attitudes towards learning and enjoy group experiences. They confidently find their own place for carpet time, choose songs they would like to sing and talk about the days of the week together. Interactive rhythm sessions are particularly enjoyed, where children play chime bars and count the beat together, experiences which are laying the foundations for future learning.

Children are respectful and kind towards one another. Carefully planned interventions and resources ensure children with barriers to learning can take part fully and thrive.

Next steps

- Leaders should provide staff with further support and training opportunities to develop their skills and raise practice to consistently high levels.
 - Leaders should strengthen staff's approach to managing children's behaviour, ensuring this is more consistent and has a stronger impact on children.
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About this inspection

The inspector spoke with the leaders, managers and special educational needs coordinator 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.

Inspector:

Sara Vincent

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): 2752377

Address:

Wayside Jubilee Centre
Wayside
Potters Bar
Herts
EN6 5NE

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 06/09/2023

Registered person: St. John's Methodist Church, Potters Bar

Register(s): EYR

Operating hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 09:00 - 15:00

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

 This data is from 4 March 2026

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

2 to 4

Total number of places

40

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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