

Ofsted registered early years setting inspection report

27 to 28 January 2026

Lucton School Nursery

Lucton School

Lucton

Leominster

HR6 9PN

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is commissioned by Ofsted to inspect registered early years settings in independent schools in England which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council. Ofsted is the regulator for early years registered settings in England.

Inspection outcomes

Safeguarding	Met
Inclusion	Expected standard
Curriculum and teaching	Expected standard
Achievement	Strong standard
Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines	Strong standard
Children’s welfare and wellbeing	Strong standard
Leadership and governance	Expected standard

The extent to which the school meets the requirements of the early years foundation stage

The school’s registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and staff establish a safe, nurturing and carefully considered environment that enables babies and children to thrive in all aspects of their learning and development.
2. Staff build warm and trusting relationships from the moment children join the setting. Babies and children settle quickly and make positive and trusting bonds with staff. Children’s learning and care needs are supported well through the highly effective key person system that helps strengthen children’s emotional security. Children learn to anticipate what will happen next through consistent and thoughtfully managed routines. Staff manage children’s behaviour calmly and positively, helping children learn to share, to take turns and to consistently show kindness in their interactions and in their play.
3. Children achieve very well because staff understand their needs and plan learning carefully. Leaders use regular assessment effectively to ensure the right support is put in place promptly to support children’s changing needs. Targeted support for children’s communication and language is particularly effective. Staff typically adapt the curriculum and activities responsively so that children can participate fully and progress well from their starting points.
4. Teaching enables children to sustain their interest and curiosity over extended periods of time. Children develop the skills that enable them to persevere in their learning. They are confident to explore new things and apply their knowledge to help them solve problems and extend their play. Children learn well independently and include each other positively in their play.

5. Children benefit from purposefully-designed environments indoors and outside. Daily outdoor learning and specialist teaching, for example in learning tennis skills, promotes children's physical development highly effectively. Staff ensure that children secure their knowledge through practice and applying their learning across the curriculum. Children leave the setting confident in their knowledge and skills and are very well prepared for school.

Safeguarding

6. Safeguarding is met.
7. 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.

Inclusion

8. The grading for inclusion is at the expected standard.
9. Leaders work closely with external agencies and specialists to secure timely support for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and for children who face barriers to their learning or development. Staff receive effective guidance from leaders and the school's special educational needs co-ordinator to ensure that appropriate provision is in place to support children well. Leaders, staff and parents work closely together to share their observations about children's emerging needs and identify how they are best supported. This helps ensure that children who have SEND and those who face barriers to their learning can participate fully in the life of the setting and make good progress from their starting points.
10. Leaders are ambitious for children's learning and want all children to achieve well. Staff closely monitor children's progress. This enables leaders and staff to identify swiftly any emerging needs or potential barriers to learning and put in place targeted plans for appropriate support. For example, staff promptly and accurately identify when children may need additional support with their speech and language development. Staff who are new to the setting are supported well by leaders to develop their knowledge and skills so that they can adapt their teaching and interactions effectively to support children's needs. Typically teaching is very well adapted to meet the individual needs of children. However, sometimes teaching is less precisely matched to children's specific needs which leads to some children not sustaining their interest in planned activities as well as they could.
11. Staff skilfully interact with children to help them practise their language and extend their vocabulary through thoughtfully planned activities and play. Staff incorporate a range of purposeful resources, such as puppets, to bring story time to life and help children sustain their interest and develop their listening skills. Babies and children benefit from the consistently calm and purposeful environment that is maintained throughout the setting.

Curriculum and teaching

12. The grading for curriculum and teaching is at the expected standard.
13. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the curriculum and teaching in their setting. They understand the factors that influence children's learning and ensure staff are well trained to identify any barriers to learning. Staff plan activities that build on what children know and understand and help them learn what they most need to learn next. The curriculum and teaching help prepare children well for the next stage of their learning, including school.
14. Leaders have designed a curriculum based on a deep knowledge and understanding of children's learning and development from the earliest age. The curriculum provides children with a secure foundation across a broad range of skills and knowledge that reflects the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage.
15. Staff are confident and effective when supporting children's developing communication skills. Staff model language through high-quality interactions, responding to babies' and younger children's gestures, and encouraging older children to use full sentences, for example, when asking for help with their gloves. Staff teach children new vocabulary and encourage children to join in with back-and-forth conversations. Across all rooms, children enjoy stories, rhymes and songs. Younger children handle textured books and join in enthusiastically with repeated phrases or animal sounds.
16. Leaders ensure that early mathematics is taught well. Children learn to count objects and develop their conceptual understanding of position, quantities and size. Staff encourage children to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems in their play, for example through discussing how pizza prepared in the play kitchen will be shared between the number of children in the group. Younger children practise concepts such as more than and less than when using beads and feathers to create a design.
17. Typically, the curriculum is taught very well. However, at times, the activities that teachers plan are not precisely linked to what children need to learn next. When this happens, teaching is less effective in enabling children to extend their thinking and develop their ideas.
18. Leaders ensure that the curriculum and provision support babies' and children's physical development very well throughout the setting. Children are enthusiastic about spending time outdoors in all weathers. Staff ensure that children are well prepared for these experiences and support children's independence as they put on their coats and wellies before they go outside. Staff thoughtfully incorporate opportunities to support children's language and communication skills through activities outdoors, as well as developing their observational skills and exploring changes over time in the natural environment.
19. Staff combine direct teaching with creative play, demonstrating techniques such as shaping playdough before children use it to create models like snowmen or ducks. Staff act as effective role models, encouraging skills such as building hand strength for later writing by pushing sticks into mud. Staff help babies begin to move in different ways, such as through supporting their early walking. Children practise their balancing and co-ordination skills, such as by climbing steps, and move confidently in larger spaces. Older children develop their confidence and accuracy in ball games, for example in developing their tennis skills.

Achievement

20. The grading for achievement is at the strong standard.
21. Children demonstrate a secure depth of knowledge and skills across all areas of learning and are very well prepared for the move to school, when the time comes. Children display high levels of confidence, are keen to share their ideas and express themselves clearly, using increasingly complex and precise language that reflects their understanding of a wide range of vocabulary. Children who have SEND and those who have needed extra support with their speech and language, develop their language so that they are able to communicate clearly and with increasing confidence with staff and with each other.
22. From an early age, children show sustained interest and significant levels of perseverance, for example when completing a puzzle or when working collaboratively within the play kitchen, or when they are playing together outdoors. Children use mathematical language and practise counting and comparing amounts through their play. Older children understand what it means to share quantities and amounts equally and use appropriate vocabulary to discuss this with each other and with adults.
23. Children immerse themselves in activities and are enthusiastic to try new experiences, including sensory exploration like using paint with their hands. Children develop a love of stories and songs. They respond well to the expressive reading and enthusiastic singing of staff. Children develop pride in their achievements. They delight in showing staff models they have made, explaining how they have put their model together and the choices they have made.
24. Children develop a wide range of physical skills, strength and co-ordination through regular outdoor play and opportunities for active exploration. Children are confident to use their imagination and creativity and develop their play in collaboration with each other, exploring possibilities and listening and adapting to each other's ideas and suggestions. Children make and explain connections between their own experiences and, for example, the experience of characters in the stories that are read to them or in books that they choose to explore together.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

25. The grading for behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines is at the strong standard.
26. Staff build warm, trusting relationships that help children feel safe and secure. They respond sensitively and promptly to children's needs, such as offering comfort to children when they feel tired. Staff implement a highly effective key person system, ensuring that children get the consistency of care they need to feel highly welcome, valued and supported. Children show consistently high levels of wellbeing and confidence across the setting.
27. Staff effectively engage children fully in activities and help them maintain their concentration over sustained periods of time. They skilfully guide children to focus on tasks, for example placing hoops on a post or making cupcakes with playdough. Children join in stories, songs and outdoor play with enthusiasm, showing great enjoyment as they splash in puddles or work together in the sand to achieve a common goal, while also managing their excitement appropriately.

28. Staff fully embed effective routines that are highly impactful. They promote children's independence from an early age. Children learn practical skills, including using cutlery, toilet training and putting on outdoor clothing. Daily routines, such as brushing teeth, also support children's understanding of healthy lifestyles and help establish habits of self-care.
29. Staff effectively model clear and respectful communication and courteous manners encouraging children to take turns and share resources. Children respond well to the consistently high expectations staff have of their learning and behaviour and respond quickly to prompts to maintain a calm and purposeful atmosphere across the setting. Children consistently show kindness towards one another, comforting each other when someone feels upset. Staff demonstrate a deep understanding of children's emotional needs and how to support them effectively. Staff help children develop the strategies they need to help them manage their emotions and behaviour. They help children reflect when things have not gone to plan and demonstrate how, together, they can put things right. Children show increasing understanding and maturity in managing their emotions as they progress through the nursery.
30. Staff use praise highly effectively to motivate children and celebrate their achievements. This reinforces positive attitudes to learning and helps children to develop their perseverance. Children demonstrate consistently high levels of focus and skills of collaboration while also developing their independence.
31. Leaders help parents understand the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. They work closely and thoughtfully with parents to ensure that families can access the help and support they need.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

32. The grading for children's welfare and wellbeing is at the strong standard.
33. Staff implement hygiene practices extremely effectively. For example, children understand the importance of washing their hands before eating, and learn how to clean their teeth carefully, which they do with increasing confidence and independence. Staff ensure routines are well established, helping children feel secure and grow in confidence as they know what to expect.
34. The well-established key person system supports children's wellbeing very well by building warm, positive and responsive relationships that foster in children a sense of belonging. Staff work closely with parents to follow routines from home, which helps children settle quickly. Leaders and staff are highly responsive to the varying needs and changing circumstances of individual children and families, and work with them to put in place support that is appropriate to their needs.
35. Staff are highly effective at supporting children to express and manage their emotions. Children develop a secure sense of emotional wellbeing. Staff quickly respond to children's needs such as, for example, finding a favourite toy when a child is upset. Staff model positive social interactions. They sit with children during lunch and encourage sociable conversations on a wide range of topics. Staff model positive and respectful behaviour during mealtimes. Children naturally say 'please' and 'thank you' and chat with their friends.

36. Staff successfully help children understand that physical activity is an enjoyable part of a healthy lifestyle. Children approach outdoor activities with enthusiasm. Through the curriculum and wider experiences across nursery, staff teach children effectively to make their own healthy choices around food, rest and exercise.

Leadership and governance

37. The grading for leadership and governance is at the expected standard.

38. Leaders evaluate their setting thoughtfully and accurately and use their knowledge and insight to plan further developments. Leaders understand their staff well and take appropriate action to support their practice. Leaders review practice regularly. They ensure that staff who are new to the setting are supported well so that they provide high levels of care and support for children from the moment they join the setting. Leaders work with staff to identify areas for development, including developing confidence and knowledge in teaching, and support staff well through purposeful training and regular supervision. Staff feel valued and appreciated for their work.

39. Leaders strategically place children's welfare at the centre of their practice by ensuring policies, procedures and routines are consistently followed. The rigorous and detailed induction of new staff helps ensure there is continuity in how policies and routines are implemented. Leaders regularly review the routines and procedures in place to ensure they are consistently focused on promoting children's welfare and wellbeing.

40. Leaders are ambitious and set clear expectations for what they want children to achieve. They support staff effectively to deliver a well-planned curriculum, ensuring that staff systematically plan opportunities for children to achieve well across all areas of learning, including through purposeful play and regular learning outdoors.

41. Leaders build and maintain very positive relationships with parents and external professionals. They communicate thoughtfully during key transitions, helping children settle quickly and move on smoothly to the next stage of learning, including the move to school. Leaders take practical steps to ensure continuity for children and families at times of change.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- strengthen teaching by ensuring staff adapt their teaching consistently well to meet children's individual needs
- ensure that staff consistently plan activities that are precisely linked to supporting children's next steps so that children increase their knowledge and skills highly effectively across the setting.

Registered setting details

Registered setting name	Lucton School Nursery
Unique reference number	EY289937
Address	Lucton School Lucton Leominster Herefordshire HR6 9PN
Phone number	01568 782000
Email address	office@luctonschool.org
Website	www.luctonschool.org
Proprietor	Lucton Pierrepont School Educational Trust
Nominated individual	Mr Ali Khan
Age range of children at the time of the inspection	6 months to 4 years
Total number of places	52
Number of children on roll	56
Date of previous inspection of the registered setting	1 to 2 February 2023

Information about the setting

42. Lucton School Nursery registered in 2005. The registered setting operates from Lucton School. The setting is open Monday to Friday, from 8:30 am to 6 pm all year round, apart from 2 weeks at Christmas and on bank holidays.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

27 to 28 January 2026

43. One inspector visited the registered setting for two half days. The on-site inspection was quality assured by a monitor. This inspection took place at the same time as the inspection of Lucton School.

44. Inspection activities included:

- shared observation of learning in collaboration with setting leaders
- discussions with the school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with parents
- discussions with children
- observations of children's routines, including eating, sleeping and transition times
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the setting.

45. The inspection team considered the views of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are Ofsted registered early years settings in association independent schools in England inspected?

- Ofsted is the regulator for early years registered settings England.
- ISI is commissioned by the Ofsted to inspect Ofsted registered early years settings in independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- For more information, please visit www.isi.net.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

For more information, please visit isi.net