

Ofsted registered early years setting inspection report

27 to 28 January 2026

Milton Keynes Preparatory School & Nursery

Milton Keynes Preparatory School & Nursery

Tattenhoe Lane

Milton Keynes

MK3 7EG

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	Strong 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. Children arrive full of energy and settle quickly, supported by familiar and well-established routines. Staff greet each child with genuine warmth and notice straight away anyone who needs a quiet moment or particular reassurance after being away. Children are happy, settled and confident at the nursery. Children find their peg, hang up their coats and eagerly rush off to start their day. Throughout the nursery, children show independence and confidence. For example, they know where things belong and take pride in taking care of the environment.
2. Children become deeply engaged and absorbed in their play. The activities planned by staff extend children's interests. For example, children can choose to explore coloured ice or create imaginary meals in the sand tray. Outdoors, children skilfully balance and change direction on the trim trail and develop their physical skills as they jump safely off the tyres. Staff support children's language well as they introduce ambitious new words. Conversations include, for example, talking about how many legs there are on a beetle and how best to use a magnifying glass.
3. Children establish close relationships with their key person. Younger children find their key person when they may need reassurance before their nap time. Children behave consistently well. They happily include each other in their play and are very polite, for example, at mealtimes. Children develop highly positive attitudes to learning and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, the move to school.
4. Children form warm, trusting relationships with staff and play kindly with each other. They show care for one another. For example, children check in on friends and offer help without being

prompted. Parents are welcomed into the setting. Effective partnership working supports parents very effectively to be involved in their child's learning and development.

Safeguarding

5. Safeguarding is met.
6. 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

7. The grading for inclusion is at the expected standard.
8. Leaders and staff work effectively to ensure that children participate fully in the life of the setting. Leaders and staff work closely with families to build trust through highly effective partnerships. Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the specific needs of the community. Leaders recognise and respond to changes they can make to the daily routines to help promote children's regular attendance. For instance, staff use their good relationships with parents to agree start times to the day. Consequently, children arrive settled and ready for the day at the nursery.
9. Leaders work with staff to help reduce children's barriers to learning effectively. They use clear structures, visual aids, gestures, simplified language and tailored support for all children. These adaptations are used as part of everyday staff practice. As a result, children take part fully and confidently. Staff review children's progress often. They actively involve parents in setting new targets for children's learning and development, and to ensure learning is consolidated.
10. Staff have the skills and knowledge to support children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Typically, the provision in place is very well matched to meet the needs of children who have SEND. However, strategies to identify and assess the needs of children who may face additional barriers to their learning are not consistently well developed across the nursery. Leaders have identified further training for staff to enhance the high quality of care and support that they provide.

Curriculum and teaching

11. The grading for curriculum and teaching is at the expected standard.
12. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of children across the setting. Skilful interactions between adults and children provide appropriate support and challenge for children's thinking and play. Regular focused observations of children's learning and development enable staff to identify children's changing needs promptly and plan effectively for what babies and children need to learn next. This helps children to make good progress from their starting points.

13. Staff provide a range of adult-led activities, based on children's emerging interests, and carefully plan activities to build on what children already know and can do. For example, children explore painting to extend their sensory experiences. Staff adapt their teaching according to children's stage of development, enabling the youngest children to use their fingers to transfer paint and introducing rollers and brushes to the older children. Some staff are less confident with the planning and delivery of age-appropriate activities. Leaders are providing staff with the training and development they need to ensure that teaching is consistently of a high quality throughout the nursery.
14. Staff make very good use of the outdoor area to promote all aspects of children's learning. They have set out areas for exploratory, physical and creative play. Staff deploy themselves well and they follow children's interests and play. For example, some staff sit and read books with children, while others engage in messy play, such as digging in the mud pit. The genuine enthusiasm of staff excites children and encourages them to join in. For instance, as staff eagerly suggest a bug hunt, children show curiosity and are keen to help with the search. They turn over logs to find minibeasts and know that the worms may have wriggled away or might be hiding as it's a frosty morning. Children's confidence and resilience are evident as they keenly explore everything that is on offer to them.

Achievement

15. The grading for achievement is at the strong standard.
16. Children achieve very well across all areas of the curriculum and make good progress from their starting points. Children's language and communication flourishes because staff model rich language. Staff skilfully introduce children to new words, extending their vocabulary. Staff promote purposeful conversations with children through thoughtful interactions throughout the day.
17. Children develop their knowledge of numbers and regularly practise counting. They learn to recognise numbers and the quantities that these represent. Children compare size, quantities and amounts with increasing confidence. Children practise using numbers confidently as part of their routines and their play.
18. During group times, children listen very attentively and with interest, share their ideas and join activities with growing confidence. For instance, they delight in noticing how noodles feel, sticking them to the table and moving them with tweezers into pots as part of their play. Children develop their physical strength and co-ordination very well from an early age.
19. Parents receive daily feedback on their child's progress and share information from home to further enhance their child's learning. Staff expertly work alongside parents to ensure there is continuity in children's care and learning across the nursery and at home. They provide a high level of information and suggest additional ideas to help parents precisely support their child's development at home.
20. Children are well supported and prepared for the next stage of their learning and development. Staff support them during transition into the nursery and as they move through the rooms and, eventually, to school. Staff ensure that children are ready and well prepared before any move, and involve parents. They take their time so that children settle and are supported emotionally and educationally when they transition to the next stage.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

21. The grading for behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines is at the strong standard.
22. Staff know the children very well and are incredibly sensitive to children's emotional needs. Their kind and nurturing approach supports children in timely and effective ways to enhance the children's wellbeing. Staff offer constant praise, encouragement and reassurance as children play. Staff get down to the children's level and speak calmly as they reinforce turn taking and how to play harmoniously together.
23. Staff help children feel safe and secure and encourage them to develop their ideas and interests. Staff value the experiences each child brings with them. They celebrate days that are special and provide meaningful opportunities for children to learn about different cultures and traditions.
24. Children behave very well because leaders create a calm, predictable environment where high expectations are clearly understood by staff and children. Children arrive ready to learn. They settle quickly and move straight into purposeful play. They follow routines with confidence and respond to gentle guidance from staff. In group time, children listen carefully, wait for their turn and celebrate each other's successes and achievements.
25. Leaders and staff have effective procedures in place for times when children move around the premises, such as to the garden or down to 'the bank'. Staff ensure there are many opportunities for children to engage with challenging and risky play while learning how to keep themselves and others safe. This extends children's positive attitude and resilience. Children relish their time outdoors and support each other very positively in their play.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

26. The grading for children's welfare and wellbeing is at the strong standard.
27. Staff are kind and highly respectful in their interactions with the children. They ask children before changing their nappies, supporting with personal hygiene or wiping their noses. Consequently, children feel valued and their feelings understood. Staff provide highly effective support for children's emotional needs and carefully scaffold this to help children become increasingly resilient and capable of managing their own emotions. For example, staff work closely with children who find separation difficult to provide reassurance, gradually enabling them to become independent. Children who have recently started at the nursery display confidence and an awareness of boundaries and have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.
28. Staff are responsive to children's varying needs and support them to develop physically and emotionally. They help children understand and manage their own feelings. Staff swiftly notice and respond to children who become upset. They take time to nurture children and support them to also understand other children's emotions, skilfully developing children's empathy and understanding from an early age.
29. Leaders and staff demonstrate a deep understanding of the importance of nurturing positive and trusting bonds with children, including the very youngest children. Babies thrive on the reassurance offered by staff, particularly during moments when they need comfort or are settling to sleep. Staff

are consistently warm, responsive and attentive. There is an established and caring key person approach that is thoughtfully tailored to each child's individual needs. This approach is highly effective in promoting children's positive wellbeing.

30. Children develop secure routines that promote their physical health and overall wellbeing very successfully. Staff embed positive hygiene and oral health practices. For example, older children understand the importance of washing their hands before meals and carry this out confidently and carefully. Staff supervise children closely during mealtimes and ensure that the food provided is appropriate for each stage of development, including supporting babies and younger children who are weaning. These well-established routines contribute highly effectively to children's safety and welfare and help children quickly begin to make their own healthy choices, for example, in choosing snacks.

Leadership and governance

31. The grading for leadership and governance is at the strong standard.
32. Leaders are conscientious, committed and deeply rooted in the community they serve. Leaders know families well, build very positive relationships and understand the hopes, pressures and needs that shape children's lives. This insight guides leaders' decision-making and keeps the focus firmly on what children need to flourish. Leaders act early to address concerns and make thoughtful changes that improve children's daily experiences.
33. Leaders' work to ensure the wellbeing of staff is very effective. Leaders use regular supervision meetings to offer guidance, support and professional challenge. Staff are able to speak with leaders at any time and feel heard. As a result, morale is high and staff feel happy in their work. This has a highly positive impact on the culture and provision across the setting. Leaders identify areas for improvement and where staff would benefit from training to further develop their professional skills and knowledge. Leaders share new learning with staff and model highly effective practice.
34. Leaders have created a caring, inclusive and community-led nursery where children flourish. Parent partnerships are fully embedded. Parents feel well supported and well informed about their child's learning, care and routines. Excellent relationships with parents are formed from as early as the registration process. This, alongside regular two-way communication, provides children with a consistent and highly beneficial approach to supporting their learning and development between home and nursery.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the arrangements for identifying and assessing the needs of children who may face additional barriers to their learning and development are implemented highly effectively across the setting so that provision is consistently very well matched to children's needs
- ensure that staff plan provision that enables children to practise and extend their knowledge and skills consistently well through the wide range of activities and play on offer across the nursery.

Registered setting details

Registered setting name	Milton Keynes Preparatory School & Nursery
Unique reference number	EY284818
Address	Tattenhoe Lane Milton Keynes MK3 7EG
Phone number	01908 642111
Email address	info@mkps.co.uk
Website	www.mkps.co.uk/nursery
Proprietor	MKPS Limited
Nominated individual	Hilary Pauley
Age range of children at the time of the inspection	2 months to 2 years
Total number of places	148
Number of children on roll	44
Date of previous inspection of the registered setting	21 to 23 March 2023

Information about the setting

35. Milton Keynes Preparatory School and Nursery registered in 2004. The registered setting operates from Milton Keynes Preparatory School. The setting is open from 07.30 am to 6.30 pm, Monday to Friday for 46 weeks of the year.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

27 to 28 January 2026

36. One inspector visited the registered setting for two half days. This inspection took place at the same time as the inspection of Milton Keynes Preparatory School.

37. 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.

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

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- Ofsted is the regulator for early years registered settings England.
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