Brooksward School, Nursery and Pre-School

Unique reference number (URN): 2861904

Address: Brooksward School, Tower Drive, Neath Hill, Milton Keynes, MK14 6JZ

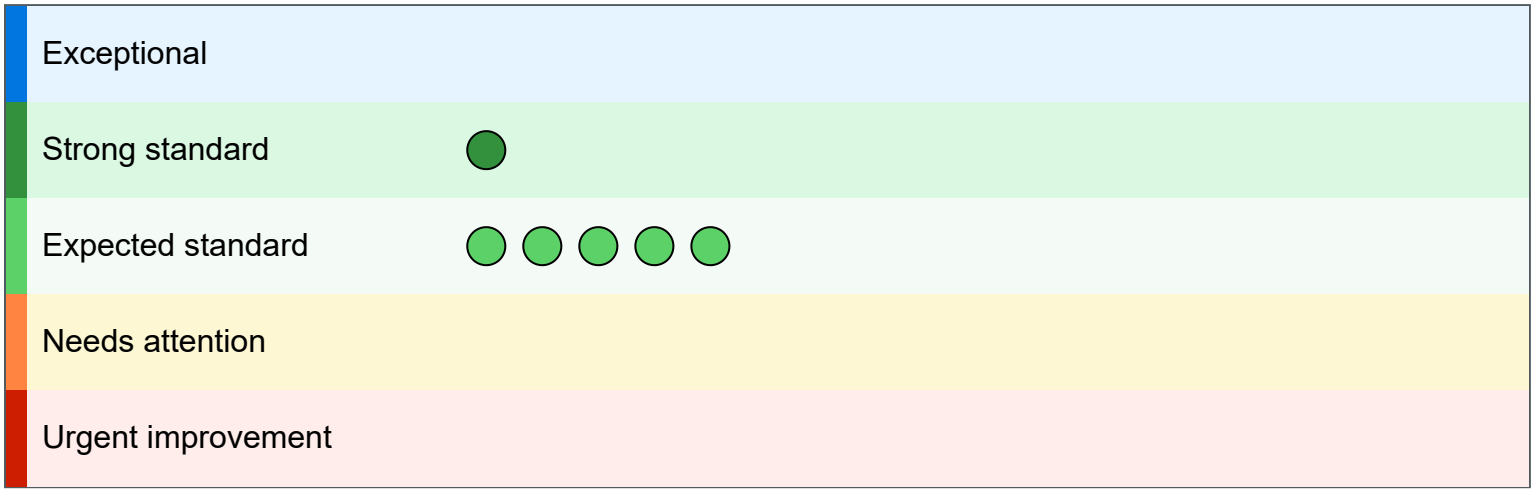
Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 26/08/2025

Registers: EYR

Registered person: The Alliance Schools Trust

Inspection report: 15 September 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

Babies make consistent progress from their individual starting points. Practitioners build securely on what babies already know and can do, such as the use of single words or gestures, enabling them to develop their knowledge, confidence, skills and independence to support their next stage of development.

Practitioners use 'focus weeks' for babies, to demonstrate and track their learning and development regularly. This allows them to identify and address emerging gaps, particularly in communication and language. This has a high impact on the babies' early development as they work closely with parents to enhance their learning experiences at home, something which parents value.

Babies settle quickly and confidently into the setting and benefit from highly effective transitions between rooms, practitioners and experiences. Leaders and practitioners work together and use information about children's development to ensure that learning builds appropriately from what children already know and can do. The setting works closely in partnership with the school to promote shared values and ethos and provide continuity in babies' learning and development as they move into their next stage. As a result, babies achieve securely from their starting points.

Expected standard

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Expected standard

Leaders have established calm and predictable routines that help babies feel secure and understand what is expected of them. Babies respond confidently to familiar cues throughout the day. For example, when practitioners say the word 'garden', babies find their shoes, acknowledging and associating it as part of their routine, and when lunch is announced, they know to sit at the table. These consistent routines support babies' developing independence and self-regulation.

Babies are calm, confident learners who engage well alongside one another. They explore their environment with interest and play cooperatively with practitioners and alongside their peers. Practitioners build warm, trusting and respectful relationships with babies. Babies confidently seek support from their key person and communicate their needs in ways appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Practitioners use explicit praise to reinforce positive behaviour and support babies to develop confidence, resilience and independence. They make appropriate adaptations to routines and expectations in response to babies' individual needs while maintaining appropriate expectations for behaviour.

Practitioners promote good manners, but this is not yet consistent throughout the day. Some practitioners do not consistently model and reinforce polite and respectful interactions. This results in children experiencing inconsistent expectations from adults.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders provide a safe, welcoming and well-resourced environment where babies are cared for in a calm and nurturing atmosphere. Practitioners develop secure and responsive relationships with babies and know their individual routine and needs well. This helps babies to feel safe, settled and emotionally secure as they explore and learn.

Care routines are well organised and support babies' developing independence. Leaders have robust procedures for managing mealtimes, particularly for babies with dietary requirements. Food for babies with allergies is plated separately, and practitioners must complete the required checks and verbalise dietary information before food is served. Effective supervision ensures that babies are closely monitored and their individual needs are met.

Practitioners adapt mealtimes appropriately to babies' age and stage of development. Younger babies are supported to use a spoon, while older babies confidently use cutlery and open cups, helping them develop independence and prepare for their transition to the next room. Babies sit calmly and eat well. They are encouraged to use their own flannel to wipe their faces, further developing self-care and independence skills.

The natural, calm environment provides babies with daily opportunities to play, explore and develop their physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have developed a curriculum based on the 'Birth to 5 Matters' guidance, with an ethos that promotes babies' independence, supports them to care for themselves and to develop an understanding for respecting for the natural environment. This provides babies with a range of experiences across the prime areas of learning and development. For example, the children have access to water and or sand daily, both inside and outside, and they are encouraged to wash their hands and faces at mealtimes.

Practitioners provide babies with purposeful opportunities to develop their physical skills, communication, mathematical opportunities and awareness, as well as sensory understanding. For example, during water play, practitioners model and repeat words, such as 'pour', 'splash', 'mix' and 'squeeze', as babies use jugs, pipes and large pipettes to pour and transport the water. Babies are encouraged to use their whole bodies as they transport and explore water, supporting both their physical development and vocabulary. Practitioners use descriptive vocabulary during interactions, however, they lack consistency of visual strategies to enhance and support babies' early communication skills.

Babies benefit from a large outdoor space where they can balance, crawl and negotiate tyres. They explore sand, water, soil and gardening resources, building on their interest in bugs and experiences at Forest School.

Practitioners support babies' communication through frequent conversations, simple questioning, songs and shared books. They model narrative language and encourage turn-taking, using specific praise to reinforce positive interactions. Resources and activities in the baby room, such as a posting box with different sized balls, stacking rings and different sized jugs and containers, support babies' early mathematical awareness and opportunities. However, there is an inconsistency in practitioners' use of mathematical vocabulary during interactions.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have created an inclusive culture where babies and their families are welcomed and valued. Practitioners use 'All About Me' information when babies start and transition forms as they move between rooms to understand babies' individual needs, interests and starting points.

Leaders and practitioners work closely with parents to identify and address any gaps in learning. They share ideas and activities that families can use at home and review babies' progress to inform their ongoing support, including ideas to support communication and physical skills.

Babies have access to the setting's experiences, and activities are adapted appropriately so that babies can participate regardless of their age or stage of development. All babies have opportunities to attend Forest School weekly, visit the school library and take part in enrichment experiences, including music sessions, farm animal visits and local community outings. Religious festivals and celebrations are acknowledged and incorporated into a sensory experience, helping babies develop an understanding of the wider world.

Leaders maintain open communication with families and respond to concerns collaboratively. They have appropriate systems in place to identify needs and work with families and other professionals to reduce any barriers to learning.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders and those responsible for governance are committed to providing positive experiences for babies and their families. They have worked closely with the school to develop a strong partnership, making effective use of shared opportunities such as Forest School, the school library and a range of enrichment experiences. This partnership supports continuity for babies and provides families with opportunities to engage with the setting through events, such as Father's Day and farm animal visits where parents can attend.

Leaders have responded positively to the challenges of opening and developing the nursery, and they have worked together to minimise disruption for babies and families. They have a clear understanding of the setting's strengths and identify areas where further development is needed.

Leaders support practitioners' professional development through a structured induction and probation process. Practitioners meet with leaders each half term to set targets linked to their roles, including relationships, routines, policies and procedures. Regular observations

and individualised appraisals help leaders identify professional development and training needs.

Leaders value practitioners' wellbeing and recognise the importance of working collaboratively. The positive relationship between school and nursery leaders supports effective decision-making and contributes to a stable environment in which babies and their families can thrive.

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

Babies at Brooksward Nursery and Preschool experience a warm, calm and predictable environment where they feel safe and secure. Practitioners welcome babies warmly and respond sensitively to their individual cues, including cries, babbles and non-verbal communication, including gestures. This helps babies to develop trusting relationships with adults and feel confident to explore.

Babies enjoy positive interactions with practitioners, who get down to their level, make eye contact and sensitively narrate their play. Babies eagerly join in with songs and participate in activities, such as 'What's in the Basket?', supporting their early communication and language, as well as activities, including pretend food play in the role-play area, supporting their personal, social and emotional development.

Babies enjoy exploring a well-resourced environment, including natural materials and age-appropriate resources that promote physical development and learning about the natural world around them. Older babies confidently negotiate low-level ramps, developing their physical development and their independence as they begin to feed themselves and use cutlery.

Babies benefit from a range of experiences beyond the baby room. They explore the natural world through Forest School activities, where bug hunting is a particular interest, and they enjoy enrichment experiences, such as 'Music Bugs', and visits from farm animals. These experiences broaden their knowledge and provide opportunities for babies to learn through first-hand exploration.

Care routines, including nappy changing, mealtimes and sleep, are calm and unhurried. Practitioners use these opportunities to build relationships, support communication and encourage children's growing independence.

Parents value the supportive settling-in process and strong communication from practitioners. They say that their children's confidence has grown and that they feel well informed about their child's day. Overall, babies are happy, settled and developing the knowledge, skills and confidence they need for their next steps.

Next steps

- Leaders should develop practitioners' confidence in using mathematical vocabulary during everyday interactions, routines and play, to lead to richer mathematical learning.
- Leaders should enhance practitioners' use of visual communication strategies, including simple signs, to strengthen babies' early communication and language skills.
- Leaders should ensure all practitioners consistently model, promote and reinforce good manners and respectful interactions throughout the day, so that children experience clear and consistent expectations from all adults.

About this inspection

The inspector spoke with the executive headteacher, the chief executive officer (CEO), leaders, practitioners and parents 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:
Clare Cassidy

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): 2861904

Address:
Brooksward School
Tower Drive, Neath Hill
Milton Keynes
MK14 6JZ

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 26/08/2025

Registered person: The Alliance Schools Trust

Register(s): EYR

Operating hours: Monday,Tuesday,Wednesday,Thursday,Friday : 07:30 - 18:00

Local authority: Milton Keynes

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

This data is from 15 September 2026

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

1 to 1

Total number of places

42

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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