



Note of Visit

School:	Guildford Nursery School
Date	14 th and 15 th October 2025
Visit number:	1
Length of visit:	2 full days, one on each site.
Adviser	Ruth Swailes
Personnel involved:	HT, DH, Senior teachers and staff team.

Purpose of Visit / Activities undertaken:

Learning walk, observations and time spent with children, discussions with teachers and leadership team, joint observation with deputy head/ SENCO, meeting with lead teachers in each setting.

Time spent reviewing curriculum, SEF, continuum of support, developmental milestones and guidance for staff.

Main findings and recommendations:

The school offers a calm, welcoming and inclusive environment that puts children at the heart of practice. Since the previous review leaders have invested in developing the outdoor provision at the York Road site, particularly for the younger children, and this now offers purposeful and appropriate challenge. Leaders have also invested in developing the indoor provision at both sites and have utilised the space effectively. There is now provision for under 2s. There will be a maximum of 6 babies at York Road and 8 at Hazel Avenue, in line with a range of research around early development which identifies that larger groups are not as beneficial for babies.

There has been a significant investment in staff development, with many new staff joining the team and a clear and well-planned induction programme which supports all staff to understand the core principles of the Nursery. As a result, staff are highly skilled at interacting with the children and “meeting them where they are”. Staff are responsive to individual children’s needs and know them exceptionally well. The Froebelian principle of “Freedom with guidance” is deeply embedded in practice and children are encouraged and supported to make choices about how they learn, with staff planning well-resourced and enticing environments which stimulate children’s interests. Leaders work hard to ensure that this principle is also applied to staff. The three core principles of kindness, honesty and



reflection are embedded in all policies and there is clear guidance in place to support staff to ensure that they have all the necessary support and information to provide the best possible learning environment for the children.

Approaches to inclusion have been further developed, the SENCO/ DH who has been in post for just over a year has worked hard to develop the whole team's understanding of effective and inclusive practice. Key people are encouraged to contribute and develop children's support plans, based on their needs. As a result, the large number of children with additional needs are well supported and integrate fully into the school day, with staff responding appropriately when they need support to regulate and making adaptations to the curriculum so that all children make good progress from their unique starting points. Guidance through the continuum of support is clear and supports all staff to understand what adaptive teaching looks like in the Nursery. The SENCO is working hard to ensure that where possible any interventions take place where the child is most secure and comfortable and within the provision, so that children are developing the necessary skills alongside their peers. Some interventions need to take place away from the main classroom, but where possible this is kept to a minimum, this ensures that children develop a secure sense of belonging and community.

A large number of children join the school with little or no English, particularly at York Road and this can mean that sometimes children are quiet, especially in the early stages of settling into school. Staff recognise the importance of this period of "intent participation" and offer excellent modelled language but understand that expecting children to replicate this when they are in the early stages of learning English is not appropriate. Staff sensitively support and encourage children to join in as appropriate, based on their knowledge of each child and their stage of development.

A review of the curriculum document shows that there are clear learning intentions and developmental pathways are clearly identified for the children, both within the seven areas of learning and the Froebelian occupations. As the children attend for different lengths of time and may join the nursery before they are two, at age two or at age three or four, it is challenging to set expectations for what the children will know at the end of each term. Some children attend for 15 hours for 3 terms, some for 30 hours for 5 terms and some for as many as 11 terms if they start as a baby. A "developmental milestones" document supports all staff to identify where children should be in terms of broadly typical development, depending on their age. This, alongside children's learning stories, a focussed and well-developed key person approach and the clearly stated curriculum intentions, ensures that all children's progress is carefully monitored and staff are able to articulate children's strengths and next steps. Staff relationships with children are exceptionally strong. Staff support sensitively and guide the children in their learning, whilst allowing them time to explore, develop and practise the range of skills they have been taught in the Nursery. Children talk enthusiastically about their learning, are well settled and clearly understand the routines and expectations. Where children need additional support to



manage their feelings and to regulate staff support with clear, firm guidance, kindness and high expectations.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the necessary foundational skills that children need to be successful in Reception and work hard to ensure that these are in place. It can be helpful to work with the whole team to further empower staff to articulate this to visitors so that the whole team, regardless of their level of experience, are confident to talk about the learning potential of every area of provision.

A discussion took place about gathering and group time. It is important to remember that the statutory EYFS refers to “a balance of child initiated and adult-directed activities”. It would be helpful to discuss with the team what adult- directed and adult- initiated activities are. Many of the areas of provision have adult led activities in the form of occupations. Some children are ready to gather and will benefit from time in small and whole groups, where other children might not benefit from this at this point in time. It is important to consider what will happen for these children if they don’t join in with group activities, and who will support these children to access the curriculum they need.

A similar discussion took place about snack time. Staff have been given training to ensure that they are compliant with the current legislation and it would be helpful to have a reflective discussion on what snack time might look like in each room, depending on the needs of the children and their stage of development to ensure that all opportunities to support children’s learning and development are maximised at all times. For example, the approach to snack in Willows may benefit from careful adaptations to meet the individual needs of the children which can be varied and complex.

The team have developed strong relationships with parents, the community and external agencies. Communication with parents is clear and parents are well supported to understand how they can help with their children’s education and what learning looks like at Guildford.

The Nursery is a warm, welcoming place which places children at the heart of the curriculum, with carefully considered intentional plans that support children’s agency and autonomy and recognise their unique needs and funds of knowledge. Children are well supported to develop resilience, independence, autonomy and knowledge throughout their time in the Nursery.