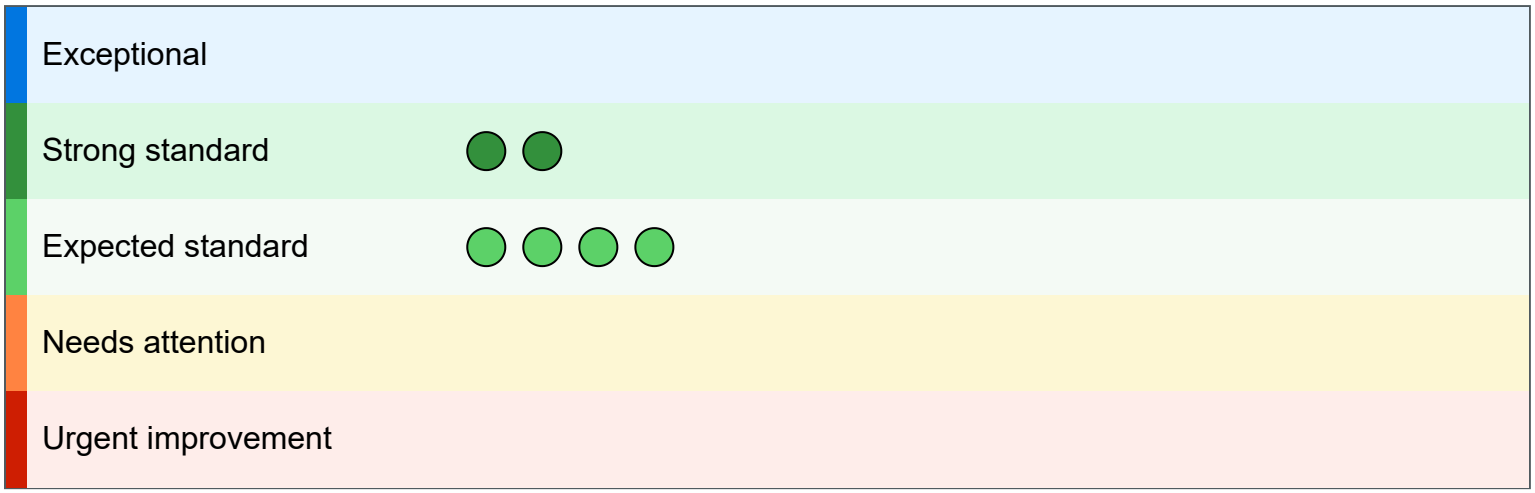
Slade Nursery School

Address: Titup Hall Drive, Headington, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX3 8QQ

Unique reference number (URN): 122970

Inspection report: 14 April 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, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Inclusion

Strong standard

Leaders create an inclusive culture where children's individual needs are identified accurately and early. Before children start, staff complete home visits to build trusting relationships and understand each child's strengths and needs from the outset. Leaders adapt provision really effectively, drawing on assessment tools to check progress and shape next steps. Staff receive targeted training so they can make skilled, in-the-moment adaptations that reduce barriers for children with language delays, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged children.

Leaders ensure that strategic support is in place. They use their checks to inform timely referrals when needed. They work closely with families and external professionals, reviewing the impact of support systematically through daily discussions. This means that adaptations and reasonable adjustments continue to meet children's changing needs.

Early years additional funding is directed towards high-impact approaches, including focused one-to-one language sessions and targeted sensory resources. These strategies strengthen children's communication, confidence and engagement. Leaders persist when external information is delayed so that children, particularly those facing multiple barriers or known to children's social care, receive the coordinated support they need to make effective progress.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Children's personal development and wellbeing are promoted consistently through a thoughtful and at times individualised programme for children. Relationships are secure and responsive, helping children to feel safe, confident and ready to explore. Staff know children especially well and draw on detailed knowledge of their preferences and emotional needs. They use a range of strategies to understand what supports each child to feel settled and regulated.

The calm environment supports children to move confidently between activities and manage their emotions. Staff modelling emotional language and providing reassurance when needed. Children benefit from rich opportunities to learn how to manage their feelings. For example, children show adults how they are feeling using visual prompts, promoting emotional security and physical wellbeing.

Leaders ensure that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, access all opportunities. Leaders track pupil participation carefully. Pupils take part enthusiastically in an exciting range of clubs that nurture their talents and interests.

Pupils acquire the knowledge and skills to recognise when they are safe and when they feel they are not. They learn to make safe choices that support their lifelong wellbeing. Pupils understand what makes a healthy relationship and how to respond to unkind behaviour.

Leaders actively develop children’s understanding of the world around them. For example through charitable and community initiatives, such as working with local businesses to get food and clothing to people in need of both. Children show an age appropriate understanding of fundamental British values.

Children learn about ways that people can be different and the importance of respecting these differences. This fosters an ethos of inclusion where diversity is celebrated. Pupils reflect on their beliefs and show an understanding and respect for other faiths and beliefs. For example through visits from parents and carers discussing their beliefs and culture.

The school nurtures pupils’ character, social skills and understanding of topical issues. This prepares them exceptionally well to become responsible, respectful, and active citizens.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Children make steady progress across all areas of learning. Staff support children to become confident communicators. Children use a broad vocabulary to usually express ideas clearly, while younger children explain their needs, for example identifying when a toy is 'messy' and needs cleaning. An even stronger focus on developing children’s communication and language would support their readiness for the next stage of learning even more. Children develop a love of books listening to staff read stories. This supports their early literacy and language development.

Children form positive relationships, take turns, and show kindness. Creative and physical development are promoted through purposeful play. Children explore imaginative role play such as through re-enacting the 3 little pigs and develop fine motor skills by threading materials.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are disadvantaged and those known to social services receive effective support to reach developmental milestones. As a result, all children achieve well from their starting points and are prepared for the next stage of learning.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders monitor and celebrate children's achievements, fostering a culture of encouragement. They recognise the importance of developing good habits of attendance and communicate this effectively with parents.

Leaders create a nurturing, positive and inclusive environment for all children. Staff usually establish clear expectations for behaviour and consistently support children to be kind, respectful and cooperative. Positive relationships between staff and children underpin this approach, helping children feel safe, confident and valued. Children receive consistent care and emotional support, promoting secure attachments and wellbeing.

Established routines help children develop independence and a sense of responsibility. For example, children serve themselves at snack time, tidy resources after activities and follow daily routines confidently. These routines, alongside clear expectations for behaviour, give children a strong sense of structure, supporting their confidence and engagement in learning.

Children demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning. They show curiosity, enthusiasm and persistence during activities and enjoy exploring new experiences with friends and adults. Staff adapt routines to ensure that all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or additional needs, are supported to participate fully.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have a clear understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. The curriculum meets the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage and reflects leaders' shared expectations for children's learning. Staff deliver the curriculum consistently and provide a broad range of experiences that support children's development across the prime areas. Teaching is underpinned by positive relationships. However, staff do not yet consistently identify gaps or misunderstandings that children have across the curriculum and regularly use this to change what they teach.

Staff prioritise children's communication and language, and most children speak with confidence. However, there are times when staff do not model new vocabulary as clearly as they could to promote children’s language development. Staff support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively by adapting activities and providing targeted support so these children make progress.

Staff promote children's social and emotional development. Children feel safe, develop secure relationships and learn to manage their emotions and behaviour. Staff encourage independence, resilience and positive social skills. For example, children take turns to serve themselves fruit and milk at snack time. Staff also promote physical development, helping children build strength, balance and coordination through outdoor play, such as using a balance beam.

Children develop early mathematical knowledge well through effective teaching and practice through play, such as puzzles and matching games.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Recent changes to leadership roles have been managed effectively, ensuring continuity and stability for children. Leaders maintain effective links with parents and other professionals, ensuring that children receive consistent support both at home and in the setting. Parents' feedback is very positive, and parents report that they feel kept up to date with what children do and their progress. Staff report high levels of job satisfaction and enjoy working at the nursery.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the setting's strengths and take action to improve it. They work purposefully with leaders across the federation. They routinely reflect on the curriculum aims and the impact of teaching and learning and children's progress to review

where changes are needed to make improvements. Decisions made by leaders focus on the best interests of all children, especially those who are disadvantaged or face barriers to learning. Leaders create a culture of inclusion, where every child is valued and enabled to take part. This helps children to progress well from their starting points.

Leaders provide staff with regular and appropriate training, which is now being targeted more sharply to further improve the consistency of teaching in the school. Those responsible for governance understand and carry out their statutory duties effectively. The governing body have an accurate understanding of the school and challenge leaders to improve the school further.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Children arrive at the Slade Nursery School, enthusiastic and happy to begin their session. They separate easily from their carers and move into the setting feeling safe, secure and valued. Children quickly develop independence as they confidently find their own named coat pegs and manage their belongings.

Children form positive relationships and play cooperatively with others. Welcoming staff greet children warmly, helping them to settle and promoting a sense of emotional wellbeing. Children show high levels of confidence and are eager to share their ideas, interests and achievements with adults and their peers. Children are kind, respectful and considerate, learning to take turns, share resources and work together.

Pupils achieve well and are ready for the next steps in their education. Communication and language development are at the heart of the setting's work. Generally staff speak clearly, listen attentively, and extend children's thinking through purposeful interactions. The school is working hard to develop this area even further. Most of the time children confidently express themselves, ask questions and use an increasingly wide range of vocabulary. This helps them to enjoy a wide range of books. Younger children develop early mathematical understanding as they build structures, cooperating with their friends.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged receive timely and highly effective support. Staff know children well. They skilfully adapt activities so that children can access the ambitious curriculum and make progress from their individual starting points. Staff ensure that every child feels valued and able to succeed. Children thrive, build effective foundations for future learning and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences that are matched carefully to their learning. For example, children deepen their understanding of the world with regular visits to the school’s ‘wild garden’. Pupils’ horizons are broadened through taking part in a range of age-appropriate activities such as multi-skills events. Leaders ensure that these opportunities are open to all pupils.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff use assessment precisely to identify and address any gaps or misconceptions children have across the early years curriculum.
- Leaders should develop staff expertise when interacting with children so that staff consistently model and extend children's language further.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Craig Holmes.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and staff. They also spoke with the school's improvement partner from the local authority. The lead inspector met with members of the governing board, including the chair.

The school is part of a hard federation with Wood Farm Primary School and Slade Day Nursery.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The interim headteacher took up their post in January 2026.

Interim Headteacher: Catherine Westbury-Cook

Lead inspector:
Neil Pilsworth, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Clare Morgan, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 14 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

95

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

0.0%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

34.74%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school 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 school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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