Ofsted registered early years setting inspection report

10 to 11 February 2026

St Joseph's School and Nursery

33 Derby Road

Nottingham

NG1 5AW

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	Needs attention
Curriculum and teaching	Needs attention
Achievement	Needs attention
Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines	Needs attention
Children's welfare and wellbeing	Needs attention
Leadership and governance	Needs attention

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

The school's registered provision for childcare does not consistently meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006. A schedule of unmet requirements is included below.

Summary of inspection findings

1. Children are cared for by warm and attentive adults who know them well. Babies and toddlers form secure attachments and respond positively to caring, responsive interactions. In the baby and toddler rooms, communication and language is promoted effectively through modelling, repetition, songs and shared play. Younger children are engaged, curious and confident to explore.

2. Children experience varying quality of teaching across the setting. In some rooms, staff provide environments that are stimulating and developmentally appropriate, and teaching is informed by what adults know about children's interests and their developmental needs. However, this is inconsistent across the setting, particularly for older children. Staff do not consistently plan activities and provision that reflect children's starting points or their next steps. As a result, resources and experiences do not always promote sustained, purposeful play. This limits the progress some older children are able to make in their learning.

3. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are known to staff. Leaders work with parents and with external professionals so that children who have SEND can access support while at the nursery. However, this support is not implemented consistently across the setting. This means that the experience of some children who have SEND depends on which adult is present. Agreed support strategies are not consistently embedded in daily practice.

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4. Children are generally safe and supervised appropriately. However, inconsistencies in the implementation of routines and environmental checks mean that systems do not consistently ensure that children's safety and wellbeing are effectively prioritised throughout the day.

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 needs attention.

8. Leaders and staff identify children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and take appropriate steps to involve external professionals, working in partnership with parents. Individual support plans are in place and individual teaching strategies have been identified. Leaders show awareness of children's barriers to learning and can describe intended approaches to support them. Children who have SEND benefit from effective support in the toddler room that is precisely matched to their needs. This enables them to make good progress from their starting points.

9. Agreed strategies children who have SEND, however, are not implemented consistently effectively in the pre-prep room. Leaders do not ensure that staff who are deployed to work with older children who have SEND are consistently well informed about each child's individual needs and the strategies that are in place to best support children's needs. This means that children who have SEND do not secure the knowledge and skills that prepare them consistently well for their next steps in learning.

10. Adaptation of the curriculum for children who have SEND and those with barriers to learning is variable. Although children's needs are identified, teaching is not consistently well adapted to ensure that all children can access learning fully and make secure progress from their starting points.

Curriculum and teaching

11. The grading for curriculum and teaching is needs attention.

12. The curriculum broadly reflects the areas of learning required by the early years foundation stage (EYFS). Teaching for communication and language and children's physical development is effective. For example, in the baby and toddler rooms, practitioners use action songs, circle games and shared book experiences to introduce key vocabulary, model language and support turn-taking in developmentally appropriate ways. In these rooms, staff provide a learning environment that is developmentally appropriate and offers a stimulating range of resources that promote exploration and engagement.

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13. Teaching does not consistently reflect an accurate understanding of how young children learn. At times, expectations placed on children are not well matched to their developmental stage. Extended adult-led sessions limit opportunities for children to initiate and sustain their own learning and independence. As a result, learning is not sufficiently purposeful or challenging to enable children to develop their interests and build on what they know and understand.

14. Activities and wider provision are not consistently well planned to ensure that children's learning builds sequentially based on a precise knowledge of children's learning and development. While staff can identify children's next steps, these are not consistently well matched to what children know and can do. In some cases, children's planned next steps do not accurately reflect children's current stage of development. This includes the provision for children who have SEND.

15. The curriculum provides regular opportunities for children to be physically active, both indoors and outdoors. For example, children access climbing and balancing equipment that effectively supports the development of their co-ordination and strength. This also contributes positively to children's physical health.

Achievement

16. The grading for achievement is needs attention.

17. Some children, particularly in the younger rooms, achieve well from their starting points, especially in developing their social skills and communication and language development. For example, children develop early problem-solving skills through experiences, such as experimenting with materials and ingredients. They learn to use tools safely in supervised activities, such as woodwork and clay exploration.

18. However, children do not achieve consistently well across the setting. While older children engage in activities and play, they do not secure their knowledge and skills consistently well over time. Children do not consistently build on what they know and understand. This means that some older children are not well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

19. For children who have SEND and those who experience barriers to learning, progress is not consistent. Although children's needs are identified, teaching adaptations are not consistently implemented, which limits the progress some children make from their starting points. Children who have SEND or those who experience barriers to their learning do not develop the deeper knowledge and understanding to ensure they are consistently well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

20. The grading for behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines is needs attention.

21. In the baby and toddler rooms, children demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Babies are inspired by well-resourced environments that encourage exploration and curiosity. For example, babies engage in cause-and-effect play using light boxes, natural resources and sensory materials. They explore changes in materials through tactile experiences. Leaders and staff enable younger

children to concentrate, discover and develop early problem-solving. Toddlers show persistence in activities, attempting tasks repeatedly and responding positively to adult encouragement.

22. The planned learning environment does not consistently promote sustained, purposeful play for children in the pre-prep room. At times, limited resources and a lack of purposeful and challenging activities can result in children disengaging, moving between activities without focus, or seeking stimulation through less purposeful behaviours, such as running around and throwing equipment.

23. Staff introduce strategies to help children recognise and name their emotions, for example through stories and discussion. Staff provide calm spaces and help children learn the strategies to support self-regulation. Babies and toddlers are beginning to understand expectations and respond positively to adult guidance. However, this support is less securely embedded for children. In these areas, strategies to promote emotional regulation and sustained positive behaviour are not applied consistently. In some instances, the expectations that staff place on children, including those who have SEND, do not fully align with their age or readiness. This can negatively impact children's ability to regulate their emotions and engage positively with adults and with other children.

24. Staff engage children in conversations about their home lives, families and celebrations, helping them to feel valued and recognised. Children have opportunities to share aspects of their culture and personal experiences through discussion and planned activities. This supports their sense of belonging and appreciation for communities beyond their own experience.

25. Leaders work with parents to establish routines and promote attendance. Attendance is monitored regularly, including for children who access additional funding. Leaders follow up absences appropriately. This supports children in forming regular attendance habits.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

26. The grading for children's welfare and wellbeing is needs attention.

27. Staff provide attentive care and support for children's individual routines, particularly around sleep and comfort. Staff monitor sleeping children closely, complete regular physical checks and respond promptly when babies wake or seek reassurance. Staff offer calming interactions to help children develop emotional strength and to support them to transition successfully between activities. In the baby and toddler rooms, staff use daily care routines to promote children's language and develop positive connections. These responsive interactions help babies and younger children feel emotionally safe and well supported.

28. Leaders do not typically ensure that staff are effectively deployed to maintain consistent oversight across all rooms. Children who have SEND sometimes experience frequent changes in adult support during the day. This can make it difficult for some children who have SEND to establish meaningful attachments with staff who are less familiar with children's individual needs and the strategies that are in place to support them.

29. Children are appropriately supervised throughout mealtimes and while they are playing. However, staff do not consistently implement the setting's agreed policies and procedures to ensure that the environment is consistently well maintained. Staff have not fully embedded safer-eating guidance into their daily practice.

30. Leaders provide parents with guidance about safe screen time and encourage families to remain alert to potential online risks at home.

Leadership and governance

31. The grading for leadership and governance is needs attention.

32. Leaders have taken some constructive steps to address recommendations from the previous inspection. This is most evident in the baby and toddler rooms, where practice is more purposeful. Leaders provide staff with regular supervision, peer observations and training. Recent professional development has focused on developing the teaching of children's communication and language skills and on promoting early problem-solving.

33. Leaders' self-evaluation is not sufficiently rigorous to secure consistent improvement across the setting. Leaders do not evaluate the quality and consistency of provision effectively enough across all rooms. Leaders' monitoring does not identify where the curriculum design, and the teaching and learning environment are less effective, particularly for older children. For example, expectations for sustained, purposeful play and progression in the pre-prep room are inconsistent. While leaders intend using funding to enhance children's experiences, they do not effectively evaluate how funding is used to improve outcomes for children. Leaders have not identified that agreed strategies for children who have SEND are inconsistently established in daily practice. As a result, the quality of provision varies across the setting and improvements are not secured consistently.

34. Leaders promote effective relationships with parents. They ensure that families receive regular communication about their children. For example, they communicate regularly with families through daily handovers and using online systems.

Areas for action

Leaders must:

- improve risk assessment to ensure the environment consistently promotes children's safety and wellbeing throughout the day
- ensure that staff use assessment effectively to inform planning and ensure consistently high-quality teaching for all children.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- evaluate the quality and consistency of provision across all rooms to inform clear action planning and measurable improvements in curriculum design, teaching, and the learning environment
- ensure agreed strategies are clearly understood and implemented consistently by staff when working with children who have SEND
- improve the planning and organisation of the learning environment so that they consistently provide purposeful and appropriately challenging experiences, enabling children to engage in sustained, meaningful play and develop positive attitudes to learning.

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Schedule of unmet early years foundation stage requirements in the registered early years setting

Section 2 – Assessment

The relevant requirements are not met.

Paragraph number	Early years foundation stage requirements
EYFS 2.5	Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners understanding children's interests and what they know and can do, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge.

Section 3 – The safeguarding and welfare requirements

The relevant requirements are not met.

Paragraph number	Early years foundation stage requirements
EYFS 3.67	Providers must prepare food in a way to prevent choking. This guidance on food safety for young children: Food safety - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK (education.gov.uk) includes advice on food and drink to avoid, how to reduce the risk of choking and links to other useful resources for early years providers.
EYFS 3.91	Providers must ensure that they take all reasonable steps to ensure staff and children in their care are not exposed to risks and must be able to demonstrate how they are managing risks. Providers must determine where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how they are managing risks if asked by parents and/or carers or inspectors. Risk assessments should identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimised.

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Registered setting details

Registered setting name	St Joseph's School and Nursery
Unique reference number	254641
Address	33 Derby Road Nottingham NG1 5AW
Phone number	0115 941 8356
Email address	office@st-josephs.nottingham.sch.uk
Website	www.st-josephs.nottingham.sch.uk
Proprietor	St Joseph's School
Nominated individual	Ms Sarah Bodill
Age range of children at the time of the inspection	1 to 4 years
Total number of places	85
Number of children on roll	47
Date of previous inspection of the registered setting	1 to 2 February 2023

Information about the setting

35. St Joseph's School and Nursery registered in 1934. The registered setting operates from St Joseph's school. The setting is open Monday to Friday form 8 am to 6 pm for 51 weeks a year, except for bank holidays.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	10 to 11 February 2026

36. One inspector visited the registered setting for two half days. This inspection took place at the same time as the inspection of St Joseph's 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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