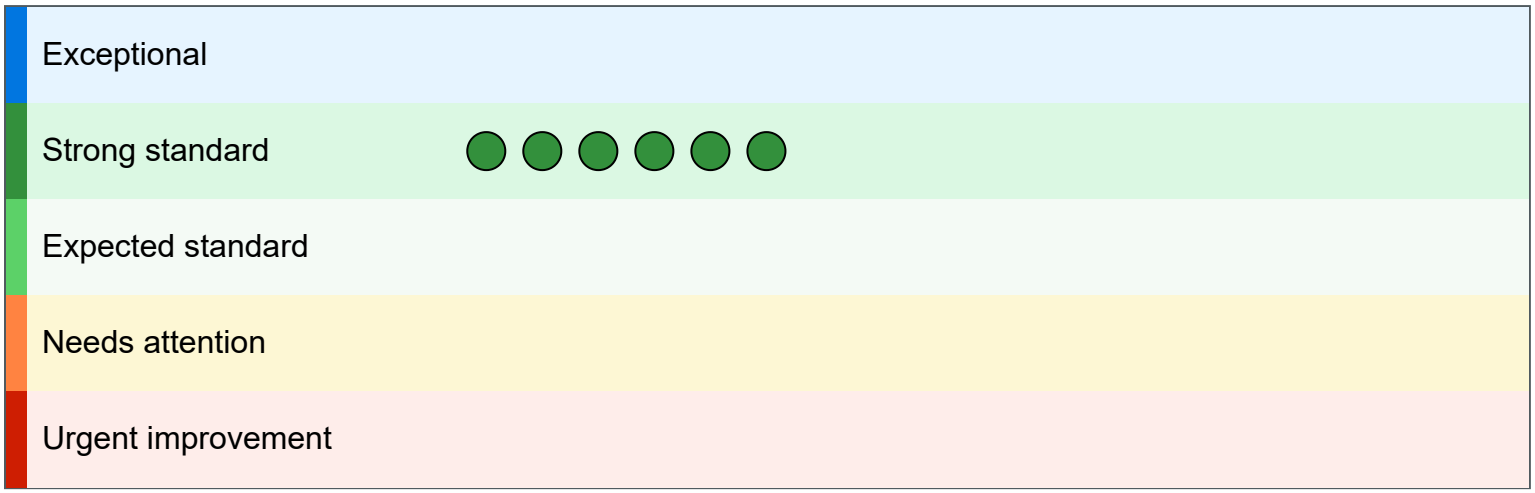
Aclet Close Nursery School

Address: Aclet Close, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 6PX

Unique reference number (URN): 113972

Inspection report: 23 June 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

Achievement

Strong standard

Children develop communication skills quickly and can express themselves to their peers and members of staff. They thrive in the provision areas, applying their learning and exploring new things. Children have sustained concentration and listening skills by the time they leave Nursery. They show perseverance and resilience when trying new tasks and learn to cope with making mistakes.

Children are proud of their achievements and are eager to work with each other and learn more. They are confident and independent, both in the indoor and outdoor areas. All children make rapid progress from their starting points and are very well prepared for their move to Reception class. Taking their starting points into account, the individual progress made by children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged is indistinguishable from any other child in Nursery.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Children are very happy and want to come to school. This is because of the highly positive relationships between staff, children and their families. Children feel safe and secure in the nurturing environment with staff who understand and respond very well to their needs.

Staff act as excellent role models. They demonstrate positive behaviours and express high expectations of the children. Well-established and consistent routines support the children in organising themselves and being independent. For example, children respond quickly to the tidy-up music and clear away their resources. Children show exemplary behaviour, offering to share resources with one another and waiting for their turn in games. They know what to do at snack time and follow the hygiene routines. Staff provide children with choices so that they can learn to take responsibility for their actions. They remain calm when children are upset and help them to re-engage with activities.

Leaders prioritise attendance as part of their focus on children being ready for the transition to school. This is paying dividends, as attendance has improved considerably for individual children. This is having a highly positive impact on their learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

The curriculum is carefully planned and sequenced to ensure that key knowledge is taught systematically through repetition and opportunities to practise. Children access a broad, interesting curriculum that deepens their understanding of the world. Staff know what to teach and how to deliver the curriculum so that children achieve well. Learning tasks are designed carefully to match curriculum intentions, and resources are used very well to support all groups of learners, including those who face additional barriers.

Children have regular opportunities to practise becoming fluent in using important knowledge, such as phonics, numbers and measures. Staff teach children directly in small groups so that all individual needs can be addressed. Children are expected to get involved

in practical activities that are fun and consolidate new learning, which they willingly do. Play-based learning takes place in the continuous provision. This provides opportunities for adults to intervene and extend children's learning, as well as initiating inventive play.

The school environment is enticing and designed to support learning. Staff encourage children to be creative and independent. Through the curriculum, they immerse children in stories and rhymes. Children develop a love of reading and they enjoy choosing from a wide range of books. The high-quality interactions between staff and children deepen the children's vocabulary and help them develop confidence in expressing themselves. Staff check children's understanding through regular interactions. They ensure that all children achieve their best.

Children who are based in the 3 and 4-year-old provision readily access all areas of learning and can use the outdoor resources at any time. The accommodation for 2-year-olds is tight, and children are more constrained in their timetable. Staff compensate for this by swapping over activities in the class so that children can still choose what to do next. Staff take and supervise the children in their separate outdoor area.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make rapid progress from their starting points. This is because leaders know the children and their families so well. Parents and carers work in partnership with the school, sharing important information about their children. Leaders use this information, alongside their own checks on children's learning, to develop a detailed understanding of each child's needs. Leaders ensure that staff receive training and guidance to support individual children. As a result, staff are highly successful in helping children overcome any barriers to learning. Leaders liaise with external agencies, such as speech and language services, to provide more specialist programmes for individual children. These are usually very successful.

Staff care deeply about the children and provide them with positive reassurance. Through their kind words, staff help children overcome any emotional outbursts.

Leaders ensure that the indoor and outdoor areas are designed to help children develop physically. Due to the variety of ground surfaces, children learn greater balance, for example when walking up slopes or negotiating steps.

Leaders ensure that the early years pupil premium funding is used effectively. Pupils who are eligible for funding are fully included in school life and have the appropriate support to flourish both academically and in their personal development.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Members of the governing body understand their roles and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for future development. They have overseen the successful expansion of the school to educate children aged from 9 months to 2 years. They are looking to develop their learning area further to provide better access to free-flow play and the outdoor provision. Governors have close oversight of both the Nursery and the new

provision for babies. They seek advice from appropriate sources when considering financial expenditure and new ventures.

Leaders think carefully about the impact any changes may have on workload and staffing and make sure that staff are supported in their work. Continued staff development is a priority, and governors check that this is in place by consulting with staff. Staff enjoy working at Aclet Close and value the strong relationships with leaders and the whole school team. They appreciate being asked for feedback about school practices and their own wellbeing by leaders.

Leaders have rigorous oversight of safeguarding policies and procedures. They ensure that safer recruitment checks are undertaken for all staff. Parents and carers are well supported by the school and view leaders as caring and approachable. Parents feel involved and well informed.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Children benefit considerably from the swimming provision for those who are due to transition to Reception Year. Through support from staff, they gain water confidence and swimming skills. Some overcome a fear of water. Children become used to walking to the pool, and staff promote road safety as they do so. At the pool, pupils have been trained to dry and dress themselves independently. Parents, carers and children value this activity highly. In many ways, this has become a rite of passage, as has the graduation ceremony in the nearby Auckland Palace.

The school promotes the local heritage through artwork and historical artefacts linked to mining. Children learn about Prince Bishops and how powerful they were in County Durham and beyond. Through such activities, children and families develop a sense of belonging in their community.

Children have visits out of school to enhance their curriculum topics, and they also receive visitors into school. They love meeting small creatures such as hedgehogs and learning about their habitats. They are introduced to farm animals such as sheep, chickens and goats. This gives them a lot to talk about. They learn how to care for other animals through growing and releasing butterflies into the sensory garden. This adds to the children's knowledge of life cycles and the natural world.

Children learn about major world faiths and different cultures through the festivals that are celebrated throughout the year. They talk excitedly about Diwali and other festivals of light. Children learn basic hygiene routines such as washing hands. Staff show them how to clean their teeth. Children also learn about healthy food and keeping fit.

Staff prepare children well for their transitions within the school and to their next school. Children meet their key workers in advance and visit the settings.

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

Children are very happy and enjoy coming to school. They are excited when they enter the building and are eager to make a start on learning activities. Children are very kind to one another and make many friends. These attitudes reflect the highly positive relationships between children and caring members of staff who show deep affection for those in their care. Staff are thoroughly consistent in their expectations and teach children how to behave towards each other. As a result, children know and follow well-established routines. Children regularly choose their own resources for outdoor learning from the tool shed, often sharing these with others.

Children access a well-designed environment that promotes learning and positive behaviours. This starts as soon as children cross the threshold and access the outdoor cloakrooms. The area is deliberately set up so that children independently take care of their belongings. In class, children actively collect the resources that they need for learning activities. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very well. Staff provide cosy spaces to help children cope with the size of the indoor area. Outside, children enjoy the privacy of the newly developed sensory space where they experiment on the stage area, creating their own performances. The many opportunities for repetition of tasks help children in their learning. By the time they leave Nursery, children are very well prepared for their next school.

Children who are 2-years-old love accessing the woodland pathway and hideout, where they create their own mini adventures. Positive staff role models encourage the children to talk and participate, which they do.

Children access a wide range of enrichment opportunities, such as swimming, nature hunts and petting farm animals. They love 'Loki' the therapy dog, who staff use to help the children understand how to look after animals well and to consider risks when near dogs.

Next steps

- Leaders should further develop the learning environment for 2-year-old children so that staff can deliver all parts of the curriculum in line with the school vision.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Dr John Redman.

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

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

Inspectors spoke with the co-headteachers, members of staff, parents, carers and members of the governing body during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school has extended the provision to accommodate 2-year-old children since the last inspection.

Co-Headteachers: Lisa Jenkins and Suzanne Staines

Lead inspector:
Mary Cook, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Lynn Chambers, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 23 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

65

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

12.31%

What does this mean?

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

Location deprivation

Well 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.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright