

Case Study: Everkind Nursery

School-based nurseries is a term used to describe early years provision which is based within a school site. They may operate independently from the school by a private, voluntary or independent (PVI) sector provider or be run by the school/academy or as governor-run pre-school provision in a maintained school.

If the school provides care for children under two years olds, it must register with Ofsted separately and be inspected independently of school provision. If it is run by a private, voluntary or independent (PVI) sector provider operating on school premises, the provider must register the setting with Ofsted separately and be inspected independently.

This case study is one in a series exploring how schools have embedded nurseries on their sites. It examines Everkind (name changed), a charitable PVI nursery network established in 2020 to deliver year-round childcare.

The case study explores:

- Background and development of the SBN
- Curriculum, pedagogy and physical spaces
- Staffing, recruitment and CPD
- Governance and Ofsted
- Funding and financial sustainability
- Reflections on SBNs

Overview of Everkind nursery:

School type:	Multi Academy Trust (MAT)
Delivery model:	PVI
Age groups:	9 months to five years
Timings:	8am to 5pm; year- round.

1. Background and development of Everkind school-based nursery

Everkind was established in 2020 to address a pressing need for reliable, high-quality childcare that would integrate with the academic environment of the primary school campuses in south and west London. The founding team recognised that many working parents found it challenging to find provision that matched their working hours, and covered holiday periods. As a result, Everkind designed a model offering care from 8am to 5pm, all year round, for children aged nine months to five years. Everkind is a network of

five nurseries, all of which are school based nurseries. Four of the nurseries are on-site with Everkind schools and one is in partnership with a voluntary aided school.

Everkind nurseries are a separate legal entity and are registered as PVI nurseries. However, they sit within the same charitable umbrella as the rest of the Everkind group. By situating nurseries on school grounds and registering them as Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings under a charitable umbrella, Everkind secured philanthropic seed funding to cover initial set-up costs.

2. Everkind's approach to curriculum, pedagogy and physical spaces

- **How does the curriculum bridge nursery and primary education and support families?**

Everkind follows a carefully designed early years curriculum that aligns with the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. This curriculum is implemented across all Everkind nurseries and provides a strong foundation for progression into Reception classes, particularly within affiliated schools. The Director of Early Years plays a pivotal role by supporting curriculum development and educator training in both nursery and school settings, which helps ensure consistency in teaching approaches and expectations. In schools outside of the Everkind network, the nursery team actively collaborates with headteachers and Reception teachers to understand and align with their specific curriculum. This includes planning around key learning areas such as phonics, literacy, and early maths.

The curriculum at Everkind is structured around half-termly projects that offer children a wide range of meaningful, hands-on experiences. It remains highly responsive to individual developmental needs, adapting to each child's progress, interests, and family context. To support smooth transitions, Everkind prioritises sharing detailed insights about each child with Reception staff. These include learning assessments, developmental observations, and social-emotional considerations. This approach helps teachers meet children where they are, accelerating both confidence and continued growth as they enter formal schooling.

- **What adaptations have been made to the physical environment, and what barriers were encountered?**

To transform underutilised school spaces into vibrant nursery environments, Everkind undertook a series of cosmetic changes rather than major construction projects. In every location, they installed secure fencing or partition walls to create a distinct entrance and outdoor play area for nursery children, ensuring that safeguarding standards matched those of standalone nurseries. Inside the buildings, the team used movable shelving units, low partitions and flexible room dividers to define play, dining and quiet-time zones without reducing the sense of openness that young children need.

At the same time, Everkind nursery leaders and school leaders collaborated closely to align daily timetables, ensuring that school assemblies, pick-up times and holidays integrate smoothly with nursery operations. This meant that staff from both settings learned to share

facilities such as the school hall and playground in a way that felt natural, with parents having the same experience.

- **What investments are crucial when adapting school environments?**

Adapting a school site for nursery use requires both strategic investment and careful planning. Everkind always secures a dedicated entrance with appropriate fencing to create an independent nursery footprint and safeguard young children. An indoor footprint capable of accommodating at least 45 full-time places helps enable peer learning and team collaboration due to the size of the staff team. Flexible spaces are achieved through modular furniture that can be reconfigured to support different activities, from messy art projects to quiet reading corners, while parent meeting rooms double as offices to optimise space.

Outdoor areas, whether playgrounds or green courtyards, are adapted with age-appropriate equipment and secure gates. Rather than purchase one-off, expensive resources, Everkind relies on a rotating inventory of books, loose-parts materials and curriculum kits aligned to each half-termly theme, ensuring fresh stimulus without excessive capital outlay.

For further guidance, please view:

1. [Early years foundation stage statutory framework](#)
2. [Childcare Works HUB: SEND and inclusive practice](#)

3. Everkind's approach to staffing, recruitment and CPD

Everkind looks to ensure adequate staffing and recruitment in a number of ways that emphasise internal development and partnership with local organisations. For example:

- At the heart of this strategy is the Manager-in-Training programme, a year-long pathway that selects high-potential nursery assistants for training and incremental responsibilities under the guidance of experienced managers.
- Apprenticeships, offered in collaboration with nearby children's centres and other PVI nurseries, provide a steady stream of new early years practitioners.
- To maintain statutory staff-to-child ratios without the need for agency staff, a team of qualified practitioners is maintained centrally and allocated to cover planned and unplanned absences across the five sites.
- Recruitment and staff performance evaluation prioritise alignment with Everkind's core values - Aim High, Be Kind, Be Brave - ensuring that every staff member embraces reflective practice, continuous professional development and a child-centered ethos.
- By offering the London Living Wage and clear career progression, the nurseries enjoy higher staff retention and morale than the sector average.

For further guidance on recruitment, please view –

1. [General guides to EY recruitment: Childcare Works](#)
2. [Vodcast on recruitment and retention in Early Years](#)

4. Everkind's governance and Ofsted inspections

- **How is your nursery provision integrated into the broader school governance structure?**

Governance at Everkind is set to be a balance between autonomy and accountability to host schools. The Director of Early Years is responsible for health, safety and quality on site. A joint Nursery Board, which includes school governors and the host school's Director of Education, meets five times a year to review performance indicators such as child outcomes, safeguarding incidents and budget forecasts. Between board meetings, the nursery's Head of Early Years holds fortnightly check-ins with the school headteacher to align calendars, share site-wide risk assessments and coordinate school events.

- **What has been Everkind's experience of Ofsted registrations and inspections?**

Securing Ofsted registration¹ has been a time-intensive aspect of expansion. Each new nursery undergoes a detailed application process that can take up to six months, before the site can open. For one Everkind location, registration fees and staffing costs during this start-up phase totaled £10,000. Schools can expand nurseries to include two-year-olds without changing Ofsted registration, but caring for children under two requires setting up a separate early years provision with its own registration under a different framework. Factoring in time for the additional administration of a second inspection is important for schools planning to expand their early years offer to younger children.

To prepare for Ofsted inspections, Everkind embeds a culture of continuous readiness. Inspections are viewed not as high-stakes events but as everyday moments that reflect the consistent quality of provision. When Ofsted visits, they are simply observing a typical day in the nursery. This approach alleviates staff pressure and strengthens the belief that exceptional outcomes arise from sustained practice rather than isolated, one-off efforts.

For further guidance on Ofsted registration, please view:

1.Ofsted - [Registering school based provision](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ced164fed915d24770bc1b7/Registering_school-based_provision.pdf)

5. Everkind's approach to funding and financial sustainability

- **How is the nursery funded, and what strategies support its financial sustainability?**

Everkind sustains its operations through a financial model that balances grants, philanthropy, funded entitlements and private fees. Two nurseries benefit from Department for Education grants and initial philanthropic support to offset capital expenditure.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ced164fed915d24770bc1b7/Registering_school-based_provision.pdf

Each setting is designed with the goal of breaking even through funded-only hours. Achieving this level of sustainability requires careful planning, with an emphasis on maintaining consistently high occupancy - ideally at or above 80 percent. Staffing is managed flexibly, with teams deployed strategically across sites to respond to fluctuations in demand and to ensure each nursery remains cost-efficient.

This operational model relies on a robust and responsive administrative system, where staff meticulously track available spaces, staffing ratios, and daily attendance to stay ahead of any shifts that might impact financial balance. Unlike schools, where funding is allocated based on a fixed pupil headcount collected once per year, early years settings must adapt to more immediate and fluid changes in enrolment and attendance patterns. This dynamic requires nursery leaders to be highly attuned to occupancy trends and use of resources, with decisions made swiftly and accurately to ensure financial sustainability.

Currently, Everkind is growing its central support team, which at present is financed through philanthropic contributions. Over time, the ambition is for this central team to become self-sustaining, supported by revenue from the nurseries themselves. In the spirit of efficiency, Everkind also shares costs with partner schools when operating within school buildings, which allows for savings on rent, maintenance, and catering. Rather than paying commercial rates, the nurseries contribute to shared operational expenses, creating a mutually beneficial arrangement.

This integrated approach highlights the unique financial characteristics of early years provision within a school context. It offers distinct advantages but also demands a level of precision and agility that requires school leaders to embrace a dynamic way of working.

- **How was demand assessed before launching each site?**

Before committing to a new location, Everkind meets with the host school's senior leadership, representatives from the local authority and reviews existing early years provision. School leaders conduct a detailed needs analysis, combining data on local birth rates, existing nursery quality ratings and parental surveys. In areas where places are ample but quality is perceived to be inconsistent via parental surveys, Everkind establishes a new provision if they believe that its school-based model will elevate overall standards.

For further guidance on funding, please view:

1. [Early years funding: 2025 to 2026](#)
2. [Childcare Works HUB: Early Years Business Planning](#)
3. [Childcare Works HUB: Early Years Finance and Funding](#)

6. Everkind's reflections on school-based nurseries

- **What do you identify as your most significant success?**

In less than five years, Everkind has grown from a single nursery to five fully operational nurseries serving 260 children and employing 45 staff. A good measure of success is that 89

percent of children who progressed from Everkind nursery into Reception achieved a Good Level of Development, significantly above the local average. Everkind's leadership highlighted their commitment to inclusion as key to their success.

- **What one key piece of advice would you give to other schools hoping to establish their own school-based nursery?**

Among the most valuable lessons is the importance of “knowing your why”: operating a nursery within a school context demands the agility of a small business underpinned by a clear educational mission. Partnerships with sector experts from the earliest planning stages help balance regulatory and operational demands with the day-to-day reality of delivering exceptional early years experiences. Finally, agile administration and daily monitoring of occupancy was said to be indispensable for maintaining viability.