



Headline sponsor

Hope is the home of everything you need for your early years setting. From role play and small world, to outdoor, furniture and maths, we've got you covered. Plus with endless inspiration and ideas to bring learning to life, gold star customer service and outstanding value, Hope really is all you need.

HOPE
is all you need

An all-star line-up

Here are the shining stars from our NDNA Nursery Awards 2026!



Young Friends Kindergarten

Overall & South of England Nursery of the Year

Judges were impressed with Young Friends Kindergarten's innovative engagement with parents, clear ethos and commitment to sharing best practice. They are highly focused on their children and have a strong sense of authenticity in their approach. All staff are empowered to deliver against the setting's clear vision and values, embedding them across everything they do. Their growth cycle approach is a really clear way to explain things to parents and provided good family engagement with clear milestones. This inspired the judges. Their plans for sharing best practice on being a sustainable, child-led nursery can only be good for the wider sector.



Bright Beginnings



Charnwood Nursery & Pre-school

North of England Nursery of the Year

Bright Beginnings provided strong evidence of the outcomes they achieve for children, what they are doing and why. Children's rights and voices are emphasised, creating a clear sense of belonging. Not only do they priorities their staff development, they also share best practice to support the wider sector. Special well-being events for staff and families are held regularly.

Other regional finalists: Bee Curious Childcare, Born To Woodland, Homeland Day Nursery, Little Agnes Nursery, Little Pips Day Nursery and Northumbria University Nursery.

Central England Nursery of the Year

Charnwood Nursery & Pre-school has a strong history of demonstrating excellence in their early years provision. Judges were particularly impressed by their well-established slow pedagogy approach. Children have opportunities and time for being curious, exploring and taking measured risks. Their staff development plans and family engagement are also key highlights.

CHRISTIE & CO Nursery of the Year sponsor

Christie & Co's Childcare & Education team is here to support childcare business owners with their strategic ambitions; whether that is looking to buy, sell or grow their business portfolio.



Banbury Cross Nursery

Scotland Nursery of the Year

Judges praised Banbury Cross Nursery for creating a warm, caring environment and strong family relationships, reflected in glowing testimonials. A clear vision, engaging learning approaches and investment in staffing shows commitment to children's needs, while strong staff retention highlights effective support despite its rural location.

Other national finalists: Flying Colours Nursery - Cammo Meadows and Innocence Nursery.



Falcon British Nursery - Abu Dhabi

International Nursery of the Year

Our panel felt Falcon British Nursery was inviting, homely and welcoming, with "pockets of wonder" inspiring curiosity and exploration. Sustainability is a clear strength, with eco-friendly practices embedded in routines and learning. Strong parent partnerships ensure views are heard and acted upon, supporting children's learning and well-being throughout their journey.

Other international finalist: Little Seeds Nursery - Doha



Nursery of the Year sponsor



Puddle Ducks (South Wales) Ltd

Wales Nursery of the Year

Puddle Ducks (South Wales) Ltd fosters a strong family feel from the top to the bottom of the organisation, shaping close attachments and partnerships with families. Children's voices are listened to and influence decisions. Judges praised the cohesive team culture, concluding the approach is captured by their message: "Arrive as part of your family, leave as part of ours."

Other national finalists: Ribbons Preschool and Rydal Penrhos School.



Caroline Akker - Bee Curious Childcare

Manager of the Year

Judges were impressed by the Caroline's passion, vision and inspirational leadership. Her growth mindset shapes a shared purpose across staff and families, supported by a whole-family approach. She proactively stays ahead of legislation, anticipating concerns and reassuring families. A judge summed it up perfectly: this is where they would want their children to go.

Other finalists: Sarah Hawkins from TNB Garrison Early Years and Play and Holly Browning from Partou Alexandra

Manager of the Year sponsor



At Citation, we're all about making your nursery the best it can be. By supporting you with every aspect of HR and Health & Safety, we give you the time to do what you do best - educate your children.



Chloe O'Brien - Puffins of Exeter Mont Le Grand

Practitioner of the Year

Judges praised a strong commitment to SEND, inclusion and ensuring every child can achieve their best. With creativity and imagination, Chloe adapts practice so all children access meaningful experiences. A compassionate support for parents, she listens, guides and is a highly skilled, respected professional. One judge said they wouldn't hesitate to place their children here.

Other finalists: Sandra Kunda from Banana Moon Westhill and Rachel Bustin from Puffins Of Exeter.

Practitioner of the Year sponsor

MORGAN LA ROCHE
SOLICITORS

Morgan LaRoche is a specialist multi-disciplinary team with a proven track record, supporting providers from single-setting nurseries to some of the UK's largest operators. They combine strong regional expertise with a UK-wide reach, acting for providers across the UK, including Wales.



Laura Walachonksa - Burbage Preschool

Apprentice of the Year

Judges were impressed by the exceptional quality, passion, and dedication shown. Laura's excellence and confidence stands out. She places children at the heart of her work, supporting individual development through engaging experiences, while building strong, trusting partnerships with parents to achieve the best outcomes for every child.

Other finalists: Ashleigh Webb from Puffins Manston Terrace and Holly Lansley from Bee Curious Childcare.

Apprentice of the Year sponsor

JUDGE'S DEMAND LTD

Judge's Demand specialise in recovering unpaid nursery fees. NDNA members receive a special 50% discount. We work on a completely no win no fee basis. We can take away the hassle and frustration of collecting unpaid fees.



Bright Little Stars Nursery - Barnet

Family Engagement

Bright Little Stars Nursery - Barnet showed exceptional ability to respond to individual family needs and scale this to benefit others.

From PREM impact to introducing Makaton, their work shows empathy and expertise. Their creative parent engagement and effective use of video demonstrates confident, involved families and meaningful impact, including supporting growth mindset.

Other finalists: Blossom Tree Montessori - Northwood Hills and Little Apples Day Nursery Ltd.

Family Engagement sponsor

nuuri

Nuuri is a new platform helping nurseries attract families by transforming how they're discovered online. Nuuri supports your digitalisation journey - giving you back time and helping you stand out to the right parents.



Bumbles Nursery

Community Support & Charity Fundraising

Bumbles Nursery has achieved lasting impact, from installing a defibrillator to supporting families with a uniform rail. Their fundraising aligns with community needs, supporting charities like Alder Hey and Zoe's Place. Strong involvement from children, families and businesses, alongside Eco Schools work, highlights their broad and meaningful community impact.

Other finalists: Banana Moon Bridge of Don and Evergreen Early Years - Fulwood.

Community Support & Charity Fundraising sponsor

Cool Milk

Cool Milk is the UK's leading provider of FREE milk to early years settings. With over 26 years of experience, we partner with 400+ local independent dairies, farmers and suppliers to supply milk to all types of nurseries.



Leicestershire and Leicester City

Network of the Year

Leicestershire and Leicester City are a proactive, well-engaged network of nursery owners and managers, creating a strong collective voice on local issues. Dedicated leadership delivers regular events, ensuring members feel heard and supported. Their collaborative approach has driven positive change and reflects a supportive, informed and community-focused network.

Other finalists: Bristol, Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire, Lancashire and Peterborough.



Millie's Mark

Outstanding Contribution

For 10 years, Millie's Mark have led efforts to improve child safety, ensuring practitioners gain paediatric first aid skills and campaigning for stronger requirements. Their accessible training reaches thousands, creating safer settings, building confidence, preventing tragedies and enabling lifesaving responses - delivering a lasting, profound impact across the sector.



Purnima Tanuku CBE

Lifetime Achievement

A true pioneer of the early years sector, Purnima led NDNA for over 20 years with vision and determination. Her leadership built a trusted, influential organisation, shaping policy and standards. A tireless advocate, her enduring passion ensured the workforce is supported and every child has the best possible start.



St Vincent's Nursery

Excellence in Additional Needs

Judges were impressed by St Vincent's Nursery's clear commitment to dignity, belonging and participation for every child. Support is proactive and personalised, based on careful observation and assessment. There is a strong focus on removing barriers, nurturing independence and understanding each child's strengths, interests, communication styles and sensory needs.

Other finalists: Bright Beginnings Childcare Centre and Dandelion Education Ltd.



Adventure Farm Day Nursery

Learning Through Play: Awe & Wonder

The panel praised Adventure Farm Day Nursery's strong belief in nature as a dynamic classroom, inspiring exploration and curiosity. Children are confident, independent and lead their own learning. A clear commitment to continuous staff development ensures they are skilled, knowledgeable and deliver high-quality outdoor learning experiences from the very beginning.

Other finalists: Bee in the Woods Kindergarden and Harbourside Day Nursery.

Congratulations to all of our winners and finalists! We would like to thank everyone in the sector for all of the wonderful work you do for children and their families. See you next year!