

# Histon Early Years Centre

New School Road, Histon, Cambridge, CB24 9LL

**Inspection dates** 20–21 September 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Children love coming to the Nursery because there are so many exciting and fun things for them to do.
- Children achieve extremely well because staff take children's interests as the starting point for planning activities they know will fire their enthusiasm.
- Children make excellent progress because teaching is outstanding and based on a thorough knowledge of how young children learn.
- The head of centre's inspirational leadership means that all staff work as a united team and want to be the best they can be for the children.
- Children's behaviour is excellent because staff manage them extremely well and ensure they are perfectly safe at all times.
- The school has improved since its last inspection, as staff have welcomed new ideas and sought out imaginative ways of doing things.
- Leaders, managers and governors have an immense impact on the quality of teaching and how well children achieve, because they keep a very close eye on how things are going.
- Parents are delighted with how well the school helps their children to learn and to grow in confidence.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice and took place over two days.
- The inspector observed six lessons or part lessons taught by 11 members of staff. Two were joint observations with the head of centre.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, school staff, pupils and two representatives from the local authority.
- The inspector observed children's behaviour and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector took account of the 18 responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection as well as school surveys and speaking to parents.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at documentation including teachers' planning, the school development plan, tracking documentation of individual pupils' progress in the areas of learning, performance management documentation and minutes from meetings held by the governing body.

## Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is larger than most nursery schools.
- Children are taught in a large open-plan classroom.
- Children attend for five part-time sessions or for a two-and-a-half day block each week.
- The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average.
- No children are known to be eligible for the pupil premium because they are not of statutory age to receive it.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The head of centre also runs an education and childcare facility and a children's centre located within the same building as the Nursery. These are subject to separate inspection.
- The Nursery has the 'Go4It' award for a creative and innovative curriculum, the ICT Mark for excellence in information and communication technology and the Quality Mark for developing basic skills.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop even closer links with parents in valuing their contribution to their children's learning, especially through the use of new technologies such as texting and the internet.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children join the Nursery with a very wide range of skills and abilities which are similar to those usually found. When they leave, their attainment is high in all areas of learning, with many children performing above age-related expectations.
- Boys and girls excel equally at acquiring the basic skills of literacy and numeracy because the teaching is so well matched to their individual needs. Staff take every opportunity to encourage children to make marks, develop the fine-motor skills they will need for writing, and to share their ideas. They also develop in them a love of reading.
- The teaching and support staff encourage children to make labels and signs, such as those made for the 'new' children to tell them how many may play at the water tray, or where their coat pegs are. In this way, children write for a purpose and see that staff value their work.
- Children are happily engaged in their learning and many are able to sustain tasks over a period of time, such as making patterns with natural materials like shells and pine cones.
- Children new to the Nursery are already clear about everyday routines and understand about sharing resources and respecting one another. Children become independent learners through having easy access to a wide range of attractive and stimulating resources.
- Children make outstanding progress during their time in Nursery. This is because staff are so attuned to their interests and their strengths, and fully aware of the things children need to work on to improve further. They work together extremely well to ensure teaching has the maximum impact on children's learning, and discuss at length how to make things even better.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs receive outstanding support tailored precisely to their requirements, and this ensures that they make the same excellent progress as their peers. There is no difference in the progress of children known to be eligible for free school meals and the others, because the provision benefits them all equally.
- Parents who responded to Parent View have a very high opinion of the progress their children make, and others commented about how quickly their children settled into the Nursery and felt at home.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The focus of teaching is always on developing the whole child and begins with individual children's interests and aspirations. Staff respond very flexibly to children's ideas and enable them to support one another in their learning.
- A child who enjoyed telling jokes such as, 'Why did six run away from seven? Because seven ate nine!', inspired other children to come up with jokes, and this resulted in them making their own joke book and performing their jokes for the rest of the class.
- Staff are highly skilled at working with children to encourage them to find things out for themselves and to extend their learning through sensitive and creative interventions. They build on children's current knowledge and skills so that they develop a love of learning and

enquiring minds.

- Children embrace and celebrate their learning. For example, a child who enjoyed telling stories acted out a story about a missing sock and turned it into a play. This encouraged other children to develop an interest in solving mysteries.
- All teachers and staff demonstrate high levels of consistency in their approach and contribute to providing memorable learning experiences for all children.
- Staff create a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the Nursery. This means that there are excellent opportunities for children in all areas of learning both within the classroom area and outside.
- A recent innovation to open up what were two classrooms into one integrated space has created new opportunities for staff to work with and get to know all the children and to share best practice. This has also given children a greater freedom to explore their environment.
- Staff focus closely on observing what children are doing in self-initiated play and interpret its quality, skilfully encouraging them to make next steps in their learning. For example, children outside selected the items from a shed to make an obstacle course and then considered how to arrange them in interesting and physically demanding ways, assisted by astute questioning from a member of staff.
- All staff are involved in making and recording high-quality assessments of the children's learning, particularly through the comprehensive and informative 'learning journey' profiles. These build up a very clear picture of each individual child's progress over their year in the Nursery.
- Staff are considering ways of making this process even more effective through being selective in refining the content of these profiles, and possibly putting them online for parents to access more easily.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Children are very enthusiastic about their learning. They come to school eager to engage in a wide range of activities and chat happily to staff.
- Staff have established a calm and orderly learning environment in which children feel safe and secure, and have skilfully set clear boundaries for the children. In this way, all children know exactly what is expected of them and how to treat others with respect.
- The school keeps very thorough records of any behaviour incidents and works extremely effectively with children and their families when any incidents occur. This ensures children understand quickly why certain behaviours are unacceptable.
- Staff are highly skilled at applying the school's behaviour management policy and take a very positive approach to helping children make good choices.
- Children have many opportunities to develop their social skills and make friends, for example, through sitting down for lunch together in an attractive setting where they can eat healthily together and learn to share.

- Parents report that children are well behaved and are safe at school. Children find risks and work out how to make them safer, for example, through carrying out risk assessments of the outdoor areas. They also learn how to use tools safely and to keep things in their right place.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The pursuit of excellence is central to the school's work and senior leaders set an outstanding example as they make clear their vision for the school and inspire all staff to be part of 'the journey'.
- Staff say that the head of centre is 'always bubbling with new ideas' and 'keeps us alert'. The Nursery takes inspiration from excellent practice in Italy and staff have the opportunity to attend international conferences to bring back innovative and creative concepts to apply to their own setting.
- The impact of this is to create a dynamic and exciting learning environment where all members of staff are valued and make a full contribution to children's outstanding progress. There is a relentless desire for continual improvement and a real passion for the education and welfare of the children in their care.
- Excellent links through the on-site children's centre ensure staff know families extremely well, in many cases since their children were babies. This enables staff to be very well prepared for meeting children's particular needs and children moving to the Nursery from education and childcare provision are very familiar with the facilities and staff, because they often share them.
- The impact of leaders and managers at all levels is extremely effective because of the thoroughness of the school's systems for monitoring progress and the highly robust self-evaluation procedures. The use of professional development and performance management to improve provision is a particular strength, as staff share best practice and hold one another to account.
- The centre's development plan is concise and clear. It is a manageable working document that highlights appropriate areas for development. Senior leaders and governors keep a very close check on their progress in achieving their goals and are constantly 'moving the goalposts' as they challenge themselves to do even better.
- The school engages with parents to be fully involved in their children's development. Staff use the 'learning journeys' as a tool to share a dialogue about how their children are doing. The school has identified a desire to draw even closer to parents, for example, through the use of new technologies to communicate with them and to share information.
- The curriculum is dynamic, creative and innovative and promotes high levels of achievement, independence and resilience among children. For example, the 'Histon Footprints' project took children into local woods come rain or shine over a ten-week period as they explored the local environment, made dens and wove willow.
- The curriculum promotes children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well, as they celebrate other cultures, for example with a Chinese dragon dance at Chinese New Year. Children have many opportunities to work and play harmoniously and to wonder at the world around them.

- The local authority keeps in regular touch with the school and provides good-quality support, as well as using it as a centre of excellence. The local authority is also engaged with the other provisions that share the same site and the same senior leaders and staff.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- is highly knowledgeable and astutely holds leaders and managers to account
- forges strong partnerships with leaders
- takes a pride in being part of the school community and undertakes regular and relevant visits to report on the school's performance
- ensures that staff and resources are deployed extremely well
- ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are of the highest quality to protect children.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110595
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401135

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	80
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jacqueline Wade
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lee Robertson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 November 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01223 712075
<b>Fax number</b>	01223 712075
<b>Email address</b>	office@histon.cambs.sch.uk

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