

King's Hedges Nursery School

Northfield Avenue, Cambridge, CB4 2HU

Inspection dates

27–28 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2	
Quality of teaching	Good	2	
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1	
Leadership and management	Good	2	

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children achieve well in all areas of their learning in this welcoming nursery. Children make good progress in communication, language, early reading, writing and number skills, and sometimes outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Strong relationships between home and school mean children settle happily, arriving eager to learn. They thoroughly enjoy the wide range of interesting activities provided for them.
- Teaching is mainly good. Some teacher-led activities and some teaching of small groups, especially for children with speech and language difficulties are outstanding.
- High quality relationships support children's self-confidence and self-esteem very well.
- Children behave exceptionally well. They always try their best and learn in a highly supportive setting where they are kept safe and receive excellent care, guidance and support.
- In this very inclusive school, children quickly learn to socialise and communicate with others.
- Partnerships with other schools and agencies are well-organised. Transition arrangements, with the on-site pre-school and the federation with the primary school contribute significantly to the school's overall effectiveness.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for improvement and, together with senior leaders and governors, works tirelessly to secure high quality provision and good achievement across the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Information about how well different children are doing is not used consistently well to plan the next stage of their learning. Children's achievement is therefore good rather than outstanding.
- The outside area does not offer a wide enough range of rich and challenging activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a wide range of activities in the Nursery over the two inspection days, including observations of the children engaged in activities they had chosen for themselves, in activities led by adults and in small-group sessions led by staff members. Some teaching was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked at children's learning files, displays of their work and records of their progress.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and members of the governing body. Other meetings were held with members of staff and a telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- A range of school documentation was examined, including the school improvement plan, the school's own evaluations of how well it is doing, minutes of governing body meetings and the checks being made on the quality of teaching. The inspector also checked documentation on safeguarding, child protection, behaviour, attendance and health and safety.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to properly reflect the opinions of parents. However, the inspector spoke to a number of parents during the inspection and considered responses to the school's own parental surveys.
- The inspector took into account the views that staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- King's Hedges is an average sized nursery school.
- Children attend the school after their third birthday and attend different sessions to suit parents' and carers' requirements.
- An increasing number of children speak English as an additional language and there is a small minority who speak no English on entry to the Nursery. Currently, eighteen different first languages are spoken by children in the school.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported through Early Years action is above average, as is the proportion who are supported at Early Years action plus. There is one child with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school shares the same site as King's Hedges Primary School and is part of the King's Hedges Educational Federation. The two schools share the same headteacher, and governing body.
- The school manages a pre-school provision with a focus on language delay for children aged from two to four years called 'So to Speak'.
- The Primary School and Early Years provision are inspected separately and the reports of their inspections can be found on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable children to make even better progress in their learning by:
 - continuing to share and develop skills across the staff team
 - using progress data more consistently to plan the next steps in children's learning and thereby extend their achievement
 - improve the range of activities provided in the outside area so that it offers more challenging activities across all areas of learning and allows children more opportunities to explore their own ideas.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start the Nursery with skills and abilities well below those typically seen at this age. They achieve well in all areas, especially in their speaking, listening and personal development. This is because of teachers' skilled questioning and the encouragement they get to listen carefully and speak to each other and to the adults.
- Children settle quickly due to the very caring and welcoming nature of the staff, high expectations and well-established routines. They become increasingly independent, for example by registering themselves as present at the start of the day or serving themselves at lunchtime. Children show good levels of concentration and perseverance when choosing what to do.
- Early reading and writing skills are developed well by encouraging a love of books; staff read stories to the children and children browse through the books in the attractive reading areas. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is introduced as soon as children are ready. As a result, they quickly begin to develop the skills to read, spell and write simple words. Children enjoy choosing books to take home and share with their families, and they develop a love of books from the many opportunities for listening to and retelling familiar stories.
- Good progress is made in writing because the staff provide a good range of activities to encourage this, for example when one child not only wrote their name very accurately but also a sentence describing a monster.
- Teachers incorporate counting skills into many activities, including playing games and short sessions that focus on counting numbers in sequence, and this is significantly improving children's skills in this area.
- Those children who are in need of a lot of extra help are supported extremely well. Adults have been well trained to support them. The school draws successfully on the services provided by the pre-school centre and other partnerships to make sure that these children make good progress from their often very low starting points.
- The growing number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those new to learning English, achieve well because staff ensure they are fully integrated and their individual needs met. Children new to learning English benefit well from the bilingual support they receive, especially those who speak Polish. This ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all children and that there is no discrimination.
- Children are encouraged to be active and to develop their coordination and movement by riding on wheeled toys, and climbing and balancing on playground equipment. Consequently, their physical development is strong. They develop fine motor skills equally well, for example when using tools such as scissors and computer keyboards.
- Music, singing, painting and other art activities give children many opportunities to develop their expressive arts and design skills.
- Proposed building work has hindered the development of the outside play area so that children's learning outside, especially when they are engaged in activities they can choose for themselves, is not as good as it is in the classroom.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is largely good with some examples of high quality practice seen in group sessions and in some of the one-to-one exchanges between adults and children. The best teaching challenges and extends children's learning very effectively. For example, in one well-planned activity, a teacher very skilfully engaged the interests of children in exploring 'what happens when we add water'. The excellent prompts and questioning by the teacher ensured all children were excited and learned a great deal about predicting outcomes, using their developing literacy and numeracy skills to good effect.
- A restructuring of staffing and ongoing training have helped to improve the quality of teaching, building on strengths and improving areas that the school had identified as relatively weaker. Consequently, teachers and nursery nurses work extremely well as a team, planning and tracking children's learning together. Staff are also positive about learning from each other.
- Staff know the children well and plan interesting and exciting activities for them. There is a good balance between activities planned for and led by adults and those that children choose for themselves, although the outdoor facilities are not as rich as those provided inside. Opportunities are well planned for children to work in small groups with an adult to promote speaking and listening and social and emotional skills. This ensures good support for children who are finding learning difficult and those who are new to learning English.
- All staff are very caring and develop high-quality relationships with children and their parents. Because of these good relationships, children are keen to learn and follow instructions well. Children are effectively taught to be independent through activities such as registering their names at the start of the day or washing their hands before eating.
- Parents are kept informed about children's work at the start of every session through the 'Learning Journey' books. There are increasing opportunities for them to contribute to these through feedback on learning that has occurred at home. The school is trialling an electronic version to improve the communication between home and school.
- Staff check children's progress regularly and keep detailed records of how well they are learning. However, not all teachers use this information to plan activities that are carefully matched to children's different abilities. Consequently, children sometimes find learning too easy or too hard and do not always make the progress they are capable of, particularly the more able.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs receive excellent support from adults on a one-to-one basis, quickly develop independence and confidence and are fully included in all activities. Children at an early stage of learning English are supported well by teachers and other adults who, as a group, speak several languages.
- Children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or who find learning difficult, achieve well because the staff across the federation work very successfully together with children and families to identify and address needs. Staff seek and receive support and advice from a very wide range of other professionals, including educational psychologists, speech therapists and family support workers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour is managed extremely effectively. Expectations, routines and boundaries are very clear, consistent and fair.

- Children have excellent attitudes to learning. They are keen to learn, eager to be involved and can concentrate well for sustained periods of time.
- All the adults in the nursery demonstrate high levels of respect for each other, for the children and their families. Relationships between staff, children and parents and carers are strength of the school.
- When the children arrive for their session, they settle very quickly and happily. They learn to work together, to look after materials and equipment well, to take turns, share and help each other when necessary. Staff consistently use the phrase 'my turn, your turn' to very good effect.
- Staff value the diverse cultural heritages children bring to the school and have developed a very strong family atmosphere in which everyone is welcomed. Therefore, children develop highly positive attitudes to others, irrespective of race, gender, religion or capability. Difference and diversity are respected and celebrated at all times.
- Parents and carers are unanimously positive about behaviour and safety. They are all highly enthusiastic and very confident about the care their children receive and they confirm how much their children love coming to school. Their good attendance levels support this positive view of the school's provision.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads the Federation skilfully providing very clear and determined leadership. Staff and governors fully support her ambitious drive and vision for continuous improvement. Responses to questionnaires and discussions with staff confirm that the headteacher has created a strong staff team where morale is high. Staff are very positive about the support they have and the training they receive to develop their teaching and improve their qualifications.
- The headteacher and her senior staff use their comprehensive knowledge and understanding of early childhood learning and practice as well as relevant research, to improve the quality of teaching and to give children the best possible start. The headteacher's thorough knowledge of the provision is reflected in the nursery school's accurate self-evaluation. Children in the nursery benefit greatly from partnerships across the Federation.
- Many changes to staffing have taken place in the last two years. Although the headteacher and staff are working hard to make teaching even better, there has not been enough time for recent improvements to achieve full impact. Monitoring of the progress of children by senior staff is robust. This information is used well to track the performance of different groups of children to ensure that they all achieve equally well. However, not all staff use the evidence they gather about children to identify and document their next steps in learning and to make appropriate changes to provision.
- The school has exceptionally close links with a wide range of outside agencies, and particularly the children's centre. This benefits all children, but especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- The programmes of work provided for the children are good because they are relevant to their age and interests, promotes overall good progress and makes a strong contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

■ Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and value the way the school promotes the wellbeing of their children. The local authority rightly considers this school to provide a good quality of education and provides light touch support.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have a range of skills that help them make a good contribution to the work of the school. They are highly supportive and well organised and hold the school fully to account, for children's achievement and for the performance of the headteacher, teachers and other staff. Finances are well managed and this ensures that the nursery is effectively resourced. They know what the school does to reward good teaching and tackle any underperformance. Rigorous and effective controls make sure that policies, including safeguarding, are regularly updated, so that staff are vetted and trained in order to keep children safe. They promote equality of opportunity well and ensure that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. They are very committed to the school, and are keen to ensure it continues to improve.

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

Unique reference number	136931
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	400305

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Salmon
Headteacher	Josephine Angel
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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