

# Highfield Nursery School

Chesterfield Drive, Ipswich, IP1 6DW

**Inspection dates** 11–12 July 2013

<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.

- Highfield Nursery is a special place to learn. Children greatly enjoy all the stimulating and exciting activities. Their play is always purposeful and they make outstanding progress.
- Children thrive because of the strong focus on care and nurture. They receive lots of individual support and attention. As a result, they feel safe and well looked after, and show exemplary behaviour.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff know the children very well as individuals and plan effectively to meet their individual needs.
- Staff love their work and are a highly effective team. They are keen to ensure that their professional skills are constantly fine-tuned. New ideas are welcomed and trialled, for example more use of play therapy to support vulnerable children and their families.
- Parents are highly supportive. One summed up their views by saying, 'I have nothing but praise for this Nursery. Nothing is too much trouble for the staff here and they support both the children and their parents.'
- Underpinning the school's continued success in improving teaching and learning are the dedication and expertise of the interim headteacher. She is ably assisted by the other senior staff and governors.
- Governors challenge and support the school well, although parents and carers are not always aware of the contribution that governors make.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven sessions or parts of sessions, two of which were seen together with the interim headteacher. Snack and lunch times were also observed.
- Discussions were held with the interim headteacher, members of staff, four governors and representatives from the local authority. There were informal discussions with children throughout the inspection.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of school documents including teachers' planning, safeguarding documentation, the school's own evaluations of its strengths and weaknesses, development plans, and records from the monitoring of teaching and governors' meetings.
- The inspector took into account the 17 completed staff questionnaires and the 12 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views expressed in recent surveys carried out by the school, and also spoke to parents when they brought their children to school.

## Inspection team

Mary Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is larger than the typical nursery school. Children attend on a part-time basis, either for two and a half days a week, or for morning or afternoon sessions.
- The majority of children are from White British backgrounds. A small proportion of children are at a very early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- A small number of children are currently supported at Early Years action and a broadly average number are supported at Early Years action plus. One child has a statement of special educational needs.
- The previous headteacher retired in December 2012. The Nursery 'pedagogical' leader, who has been at the school for six years, is acting as the interim headteacher. The headteacher and governing body are responsible for the on-site children's centre and private day-care facility and an annexe located on a different site. These settings are inspected separately.
- The school has achieved a number of awards. These include Level 5 RHS for school gardening, Eco Schools Silver award and a record of commitment from UNICEF for promoting the United Nations Children's Charter.

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

- Strengthen the governance of the school further by:
  - ensuring that the governors visit the school more regularly to collect more first-hand evidence of its work
  - providing parents and carers with more information about the work governors do and their impact in helping the school to improve.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- When children start school their skills vary but are often below those expected for their age. As a result of high-quality teaching and stimulating activities, all groups of children make good, and often rapid, progress. Children leave the Nursery with levels that are at least in line with national expectations and often exceed them. They are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Children thoroughly enjoy their learning. Fundamental to the children's rapid progress is the excellent emphasis given to promoting their personal, social and emotional development. Their ability to work well together and take responsibility for their own learning, along with their high levels of independence, underpin their extremely positive attitudes to learning.
- Children challenge themselves to try new things, knowing that adults will always be there to help if necessary. For example, they confidently test how water flows through guttering and change the flow by adding different obstacles into the gutters. The secure and positively encouraging atmosphere means that children have the confidence to try out new things.
- Children who are learning English as an additional language make excellent progress. Well-chosen individual support and excellent modelling of language lead to rapid gains in their communication skills.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make excellent progress. Staff make excellent use of video footage, which is shared with parents and carers so that needs are quickly identified and children receive a consistent approach to their learning both at home and at school. All children learn key sign language words so they can communicate with one another. The school makes excellent use of a range of external agencies to support those with specific learning needs.
- Children enjoy books, stories and the many opportunities to share them. They are able to recall the events from *The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch* and can match objects to the rhyming words in the *Mrs Pirate* story. They frequently use early writing skills to record what they have observed, for example when making treasure maps or making signs for the bicycle track.
- Children make particularly rapid gains in their mathematical skills because of the school's highly effective promotion of numeracy and problem solving. Every opportunity is taken to develop early counting skills, for example in counting shells and the number of cups needed for snack time. Children are given excellent opportunities to reason and explain their actions.
- Children make excellent progress in all aspects of their physical development. They use the climbing equipment well, and show good coordination when dancing, making marks on paper to music and using metal detectors to find and dig for buried treasure.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection. Adults plan activities for each child's individual progress because they have excellent knowledge of how young children learn best, and they know the children exceptionally well. The teaching team regularly reflect, sharing their observations and children's interests and ideas so that they can make the most progress.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive excellent support and are fully included in school life. Staff have high expectations of what all children are capable of achieving. As one staff member said, 'We support and challenge every child to the best of their ability.' This underpins the Nursery's success.
- The staff are adept in knowing when to step back and give children the space to explore and learn for themselves, and when to step in and ask questions to move learning forward. Staff are skilled in getting children to ask questions about the world around them. This is particularly evident in the outdoor 'Forest School', and trips to the Dales and to the new meadow and pond. Children are challenged to solve problems and develop their critical thinking skills. Through such regular experiences, children develop a remarkable appreciation of the natural world.
- Staff create an extremely purposeful atmosphere and a highly stimulating environment. Children are excited by the wide range of opportunities to learn, both inside and in the outdoor areas. A wide range of resources is used imaginatively. For example, children used the computerised whiteboard, cameras and a light box to design their own costumes. A wide range of fruits and vegetables are grown, harvested and cooked by the children.
- All staff are involved in checking children's learning and making notes about what they are able to do. They keep detailed records and chart children's progress in 'learning journey' folders. Parents say they appreciate being able to share and contribute to these on a regular basis.
- Many memorable experiences capture children's imagination. Children talk enthusiastically about their recent train journey, finding the giant's key to his castle, making a mudslide and watching their chicks hatch.

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

- Children's behaviour is exemplary, no matter what they are doing. They respond extremely well to the high standards of care and support they receive. They have highly developed attitudes to learning.
- Children's strong relationships and confidence with staff demonstrate that they feel safe. Parents and carers all agree that the school keeps their children safe.
- Children run eagerly into school and quickly settle to their activities. They successfully collaborate and learn together in small groups. They know how to take turns and share resources, and are extremely good at listening to one another.
- Children learn to take small risks and work out how to keep themselves safe. For example, they use knives carefully when making sandwiches, act out how to keep safe on their trip to the beach, and take care when using real hammers and nails.
- Children have a highly developed understanding for their age of their roles and responsibilities. They understand that they can expect certain things from the nursery staff, but also understand that they have to do their own jobs such as watering the plants and tidying away activities. Children have an outstanding understanding of sustainability issues. They use the 'green hands' signs to check that water and electricity are not being wasted and avidly check that the right objects are in the correct recycle bin.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The interim headteacher is providing inspirational leadership. The school has not stood still since its previous outstanding report. Additional land has been used to provide additional outdoor space, services within the children's centre have been further developed and the extended care has grown. The interim headteacher is leading a complex organisation skilfully and carefully.
- The interim headteacher is ably assisted by the other senior staff, who provide outstanding role models for teaching, and are well respected by the other staff.
- All staff and the governing body share the vision to provide the very best for every child. Staff morale is very high and the staff questionnaires show that staff are proud to be working at the school. Staff take every opportunity to learn from one another, try out new ideas and make learning fun. High-quality teamwork is a major factor in the school's success.
- The interim headteacher's consistently high profile in the Nursery ensures that she is able to check that the high expectations for children's learning are being met. Her detailed knowledge of all the children results in clear evaluations of the staff's effectiveness. The setting of targets for staff to help them improve their skills is well planned.
- Staff strongly agree that the school is led and managed very well. The links with the children's centre and day-care on site are strong. This has a positive effect on children's learning, especially through the support provided for their families. The school has developed its links with a wider range of primary schools, ensuring a very smooth transition of children from one phase of education to another.
- The school's partnership with parents is a major strength, particularly its support for vulnerable families. Parents spoke of many instances where the school has 'gone the extra mile' in order to help individual children and parents. Parents have many opportunities to find out more about the school and their children's learning. Parents particularly enjoy sharing the learning journey folders when they are sent home regularly.
- The local authority provides suitably 'light touch' support to this outstanding school. Practitioners from other schools visit the school, particularly to see how well outdoor learning has been developed.
- The rich curriculum interweaves many opportunities for children to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills. Many exciting activities create a sense of 'awe and wonder' in the children; for example when children keenly anticipate what is contained in the 'Pirates' bag'.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are committed to continuous improvement. They have appropriate systems to review the work of the headteacher and staff, and to link pay rises and promotion to performance. They hold the school to account through their meetings and sub-committees. Visits during the school day are less frequent. This means that they are not always experiencing the nursery's work at first-hand, and that parents and carers are sometimes unaware of the value of governors' support. Governors fully understand their responsibilities to keep children safe. They also make sure that decisions about how money is used are well considered to give best value.

## 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>	124525
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	402265

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	102
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Stewart
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Newton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 Nov 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01473 742534
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