

Highfield Nursery School

Finedon Road, Wellingborough, NN8 4AB

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children make good progress in developing skills that will help them to communicate, read, write, count and solve problems. They make especially good progress in learning to get along with each other.
- Children who are disabled and those with special educational needs, as well as those from minority ethnic groups, make good progress. They are very well supported, often individually or in very small groups.
- Good quality teaching and support provide children with a range of activities that help them to learn effectively through play. Adults successfully help children to grow in confidence.
- Children behave well and are happy because they are very well cared for. All children are known and valued as individuals. This is particularly helpful for those learning to speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds as it helps them to settle quickly and make friends.
- The school has effective links with parents and carers through the children's centre. Parents speak highly of the support the school provides.
- Under the good leadership of senior staff and governors, everyone strives for the best outcomes. Teamwork and morale are strong.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although there are some examples of good-quality exchanges that promote sustained thinking and high-quality learning, adults do not do enough to extend children's thinking and communication skills.
- There are not enough opportunities for children to work regularly in small groups to extend their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Although end-of-year targets for improvement are set, assessment information is not systematically used to set termly achievement targets. This hampers leaders' grasp of the effectiveness of planned improvements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight learning sessions, including visits where phonics (linking sounds and letters) was being taught. Some of the sessions were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at progress and attainment data, the school's development plan, curriculum plans, documentation from the governing body, notes on the checks made on the quality of teaching, arrangements for safeguarding and the promotion of attendance, as well as some of the children's 'learning journeys'.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of staff with specific responsibilities and representatives of the governing body. The inspector spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke to parents and carers whose children returned in September this year. Parents and carers who stayed to see their children settle into the nursery also contributed their views. Seven parents and carers completed the online survey Parent View. This was not sufficient to see the results of the survey on the website.
- Questionnaires completed by 19 members of the school staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The nursery is of average size and provides part-time places for children in morning and afternoon sessions.
- Few children stay at the nursery for more than a year. Most start when they are just three years of age, and leave at the age of four.
- Most children join the school in autumn term. They attend either in the morning or the afternoon, and have the opportunity to attend the optional breakfast or lunch club.
- The children in the nursery come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Around a third of the children speak English as an additional language; most of these are at a very early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs who are supported through Early Years Action is in line with that found in most schools. The proportion supported at Early Years Action Plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below that found in schools nationally.
- The school shares the site with a children's centre which is managed by the headteacher and governing body. The children's centre provides a wide range of services, such as a baby and toddler drop-in group, and advice, guidance and support relating to family, maternity and postnatal matters. These services, together with other provision based in the children's centre, are subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching and assessment practices so that children make even more progress by:
 - developing adults' questioning skills so they regularly ask questions that make children think through their ideas
 - providing more frequent adult-led activities for children to work in small groups to accelerate their writing and number skills
 - sharpening the use of assessment information by setting termly targets so that leaders, including governors, have a more regular overview of the effectiveness of planned improvements which they can accurately measure.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- When children start in the nursery, their skills and experience are below those normally expected of this age, particularly in terms of speaking and listening skills, and personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave, children's skills are in line with expectations for their age: a few children do even better than this and achieve a little above expectations for their age.
- As a result of the very effective support they are given, children at a very early stage in learning to speak and understand English make very good progress in developing their communication skills. The school provides frequent speaking and listening sessions to help them to catch up and learn new words. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make good progress in relation to their abilities and starting points. They are fully included and participate in all nursery activities.
- A wide range of activities promotes children's physical development well. Children quickly develop skills as they work with small tools, climb wooden frames outside and learn to hold and write with a pencil. They enjoy mark-making and writing activities and are keen to practise writing their names and labelling their work. Children respond well to the good opportunities they have to learn letters and sounds and to look at books. Throughout the nursery, books are available for children to look at and share, and to borrow to take home.
- Progress in personal, social and emotional development is excellent, and children settle into the routines of the nursery smoothly. Children were seen interacting well and beginning to consider the feelings of others. An example of this was when children were seen playing together in the sand and water trays without fuss or upset.
- Children try hard to do things for themselves, such as putting coats and boots on to play outdoors or remembering to wash their hands after messy activities or before snack time. Children thoroughly enjoy snack time when they can choose the fruit they would like to eat and pour their own drink. They especially enjoy the many opportunities they have to sing together. They develop their number skills as they sing counting rhymes or hunt for hidden teddies in the sand.
- Knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development are fostered effectively by the range of activities planned and laid out for children to choose. Activities on the interactive whiteboard or computers are helping to establish the skills they will need to use information and communication technology confidently.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Staff work well together as a team and are well trained in teaching young children. They carry out regular observations of what children are learning and review their work together each week. These are used to plan what children need to learn next as well as to follow children's progress individually or in groups.
- Bilingual support staff are skilled in providing for children who are learning English as an additional language. All staff make good use of books in English, as well as other languages, to support children and families who do not speak English at home.

- Staff work productively with a range of other professionals to ensure good support for children who have special educational needs; this is helping those children to make the same good progress as everyone else.
- Adults are skilful at encouraging children to solve problems. During the inspection, the children were acting out the story of Goldilocks, with different sizes of bowls, spoons, beds, chairs and teddies. Much fun was had in feeding the bears and putting them into the right size beds. The children were developing their problem-solving skills, as well as learning numbers and shapes. They cooperated well with each other, and one boy noted with great delight that share and bear sounded the same. This provided an excellent opportunity for children to talk and learn new words.
- Children show increasing confidence as learners as a result of good teaching. Relationships at all levels are strong. Parents and carers commented very enthusiastically to the inspector on how well they feel that their children are taught and cared for.
- Teachers make good use of the outdoor area which is highly stimulating for children. Activities are arranged so that there is time for children to explore their own activities, both indoors and outdoors. Individual needs, not only for those with special educational needs but for all the children, are well catered for. However, adult-led activities to extend literacy and numeracy skills are not frequent enough, and opportunities to accelerate basic writing and numeracy skills are sometimes missed.
- Nursery staff constantly talk with children to develop their skills in speaking and listening. They question children about what they are finding and what they need to do next, but these questions are not always of a sufficiently high quality to extend children's learning and help them to explore new words and ideas.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Children are eager to come into nursery. Although they had only been in school for a few weeks at the time of the inspection, children are already used to the routines of choosing activities freely. They show very positive attitudes to learning, and happily join in the lively and enjoyable curriculum.
- Relationships between children and staff are a real strength, and this helps children to develop their confidence. All children are treated equally and there is a zero tolerance to any form of discrimination.
- Most children are polite, have good manners and behave well. They learn to play well together and there are no recorded incidents of bullying. Children talk about characters' emotions from their expressions in the pictures teachers show them when reading stories. They also discuss how these characters might feel if, for example, they look happy or sad.
- Children are taught how to take care of themselves and they clearly feel safe. They also learn how to eat healthily. They help to tidy up and get the Nursery ready for the next group of children to use.
- Attendance is typical for children of this age. The school checks children's daily attendance and works closely with parents to help them understand the importance of children being in school each day.

- Parents, carers and staff agree that children are happy in school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the senior leadership team, well supported by the governing body and staff, have made sure that the caring nature of the school and its strong commitment to learning through play have been maintained. Everyone shares the determination to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children.
- Leadership and management of extra provision for those who speak English as an additional language are a strength and, together with good special needs provision, results in children making good, and frequently very good, progress. Excellent links with outside agencies, and particularly the children's centre, make a significant contribution to children's learning.
- Communication with parents and carers is good. There is clear information about events and opportunities to support the school, alongside 'learning journals' that show parents and carers how their children are progressing.
- The curriculum is well planned with a wide range of extra activities, outside visits and visitors to school. Children learn how to grow vegetables and to look after plants. The nursery celebrates festivals across all of the faiths and cultures represented in school and this contributes well to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The school promotes equality of opportunity well, and this is reflected in the range of activities that children can enjoy so that they make good progress.
- The headteacher has been successful in maintaining a good school while making sure the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. For example, staff now use the information they gather on how well children are doing to make sure activities help them to improve continually. In addition, the outside area has been creatively redesigned to promote all the areas of learning effectively.
- The headteacher regularly reviews the progress children make and has a good understanding of the strengths of the school as well as areas that need improvement. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Professional development is effective and is linked to issues identified when managing the performance of staff.
- The school development plan identifies well-chosen actions to help the children to learn and progress well. It sets out achievement targets for the end of the year, but these are not broken down into targets for each term, against which to measure progress because use of assessment is not sufficiently rigorous or incisive enough.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the previous inspection, governors have successfully developed their roles and responsibilities. Governors have a good understanding of how well the school is doing. They know what the school is good at as well as how it can get better. Together with the headteacher, they contribute to managing staff performance and pay. They have an accurate view of teaching and are able to hold the school to account for the effect of teaching on children's learning. The governing body has a good grasp of the school budget, making sure that money is spent wisely to support children in order to ensure that they achieve well. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively, ensuring that procedures to safeguard

children's welfare are managed well and reviewed regularly. Governors act as the governing body for the children's centre on the same site, so they are in an excellent position to maintain an overview of all provision available to families in the locality.

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	121784
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	429581

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	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Dunkley
Headteacher	Josette Mallon
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2011
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