

The Fields Children's Centre

Galfrid Road, Cambridge, CB5 8ND

Inspection dates 17–18 December 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children make good progress in all areas of learning and most reach the levels expected for their age by the time they start school.
- Children make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development, and a good number reach a level higher than that expected for their age.
- Children enjoy taking charge of their own learning and so concentrate for good periods of time in activities. They persevere well with new skills and most accomplish them.
- Consistently high expectations and support from all adults ensure children's behaviour is nearly always impeccable.
- Children show that they feel safe through the confidence with which they ask adults and each other for help and join in with new experiences.
- Teaching is at least good and sometimes outstanding. All adults who work in the nursery know the children's needs well and so guide their learning effectively when they play alongside or with them.
- Children who have the most pressing needs are given quick and effective support to help them catch up.
- The governing body is clear about what is working well and what needs to be improved. Governors work closely with nursery staff to ensure that information about children's progress informs clear and accurate targets for improvement.
- The headteacher has established a staff team that is fully focused on helping children to do as well as they can. Targets for improving children's learning and progress are linked closely to staff appraisal targets and training.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Adults do not always give children the opportunity and time to talk about what they are doing and thinking during all activities.
- The most-able children are not always given work which makes them think and work harder when they finish activities quickly and easily.
- Leaders do not monitor the progress of the most-able children with the same rigour as they do for other groups of children.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed both morning and afternoon sessions in the nursery, about half of the time jointly with the headteacher. Six teachers, six nursery nurses and two teaching assistants were observed. She also joined the children for Christmas lunch and observed a speech and language session.
- The inspector looked at the children's learning journeys, past and current information about their progress, and children's pictures and writing on display.
- The inspector also looked at documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding, the school's checks about what is going well, and school improvement planning.
- The inspector met with staff and with representatives of the governing body. She spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The inspectors talked to parents informally at the start and end of sessions. She took into account the 14 responses shown in the online questionnaire (Parent View) and also the nursery school's own parent surveys.
- The inspectors took note of the 12 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Georgina Beasley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Fields Children's Centre is larger than the average-sized nursery school.
- The majority of children are from White British backgrounds. The remainder of children are from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A higher number of children than average speak English as an additional language.
- The nursery does not receive funding for the pupil premium (extra funds for children known to be eligible for free school meals, children in local authority care and other children). Nevertheless, an above-average proportion of children are known to be eligible for and so receive a free school meal every day.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported through early action is above average. The proportion supported at early action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The headteacher is also head of the adjoining children's centre and day-care provision.
- The nursery school shares a governing body with the adjoining children's centre and day-care provision.
- The on-site breakfast club and after-school club, 'Catkins', are managed by the governing body and are included in this report.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that all adults:
 - extend and increase the opportunities and time for children to talk about what they are thinking and doing during activities
 - provide harder work for the most-able children to show that they can do even more when they complete tasks and activities quickly and easily.
- Monitor the progress of the most-able children with the same rigour as for other groups of children by:
 - checking their progress as a group with the same regularity as other groups
 - setting targets for the number of children predicted to reach higher than age-related levels by the time that they start school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Many children start nursery with abilities and skills that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress and, by the time that they start school, most are working within the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning except in their speaking skills. Boys and girls do as well as each other, including in reading and writing. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- A good number of children reach levels above those for their age in their personal, social and emotional development. This reflects outstanding progress in this area of learning. Only a few reach above the levels expected for their age in all other areas of learning. The most-able children make good progress, and are praised for their accomplishments, but some are not always challenged to try harder things when they complete activities quickly and easily.
- Children who have special educational needs make good progress. Those who need support to help them behave well make excellent progress and quickly learn to play amicably with other children. Those lacking in confidence when they start nursery receive positive support from their key worker until they are confident to go to the nearest adult for help when the key worker is not there.
- Children who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress and catch up quickly. By the time that they start school, they talk about their personal experiences confidently. Children known to be eligible for free school meals make rapid progress and most reach the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning except in their speaking skills.
- Children enjoy playing outside and, in particular, the 'mud kitchen'. The range of wheeled toys and climbing equipment helps them to develop confident climbing, running and balancing skills. They use the space with good thought to their own and others' safety. Wrapping presents in Santa's Workshop helps them to use scissors to cut paper and sticky tape with increasing levels of skill.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is always at least good. The strong focus on how children learn help teachers to plan activities that play to these strengths and enable the children to take their play and learning in a different direction if they wish. When playing in the 'mud kitchen', the children described how their wellingtons 'squelched' when they pulled them out of the mud and went on to explore the different sounds when they jumped in with both feet.
- The atmosphere in the nursery is extremely positive. Children explore new experiences and resources with confidence. They know that adults are there to help and respond to the positive encouragement by persevering if they get stuck or find a new skill difficult. As a result, one child learned to ride a short distance for the first time on a two-wheeled bicycle.
- Adults check precisely what children can do during and after sessions. They record this in detail in each child's 'learning journeys' folder. They join in with the children's play, adding resources or asking questions that help the children to develop different skills at the same time. One boy who had been wrapping presents for a while was encouraged to write labels for each of his family members, thus encouraging him to use his writing skills.

- Adults give good and effective individual support to children, particularly if they have a specific need. Those who receive speech and language support make good gains in their language and speaking skills.
- Adults ask questions that help children to show what they can and cannot do. When children answer with one word or short phrases, they do not always ask another question or give them the time that they need to speak in full sentences. Additionally, while adults explain what words mean, they do not always provide children with enough opportunities to check whether they understand their meaning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children concentrate extremely well in all activities, including those that they lead themselves and when they come together in small groups for story, learning about letters and the sounds that they make (phonics), and singing and music sessions. They remain attentive throughout due to their extremely positive attitudes and good relationships with staff.
- The children's behaviour is always good and for much of the time is exemplary. They know what good and unacceptable behaviour looks like and are quick to tell an adult if they do not like how another child is behaving. The need to contact parents about behaviour is extremely rare. Parents who spoke to the inspector and who responded to Parent View are unreservedly positive about behaviour and are confident that their children feel safe.
- The children are polite to adults and to each other. Their manners and behaviour during the Christmas lunch were impeccable, reflecting the daily opportunities that they have to enjoy a meal together during breakfast, snack times and lunch.
- Children understand why they must share. They often set the timer going themselves to signal when someone must leave an activity so that another child can have a turn. They then give up their place without further reminder.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a safe and happy place for children to get ready for learning at the start of the day and to relax at the end of the day.
- The nursery has rigorous procedures in place to encourage good attendance. Parents are always phoned immediately after each session starts to find out why their child is not in nursery that day.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has an accurate view of what the nursery does well. She has worked closely with all staff to build the leadership capacity so that she is not the only person leading improvement. A different member of staff takes responsibility for curricular areas. The outside environment and the way learning is organised to give the children more independence have improved since the previous inspection.
- The deputy headteacher works closely with family support workers to ensure that support is in place for children who have special educational needs before they start nursery. As a result, this group of children settle quickly and begin to make good progress as soon as they start.
- Teachers play a full role in the leadership of learning and teaching. Teachers meet at the end of

every day to talk about the day and to plan additional resources or to change activities to ensure that children's learning is developed further the next day. Over a period of time, every child's learning is discussed at some point.

- Discussions often focus on particular groups of children including those with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children born in the summer months to check and plan extra support that is helping them to catch up quickly. Children who are most able are not discussed as a group often enough and so checks to ensure that they are making as much progress as they can are not so rigorous.
- Clear targets are set for the number of children expected to make good progress in order to reach their age-related levels. There is currently no target set for the number expected to reach higher than their age-related levels.
- Activities promote the children's learning well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well. Children learn about festivals and customs from their own countries, including Britain, Poland and China. For example, they enjoyed tasting the traditional Polish foods eaten by Polish people at Christmas. The field area is used extremely well to give children opportunities to be adventurous within a safe environment. 'Forest school' activities promote a sense of wonder and, at the same time, teach the children how to care for the environment and living things.
- Parents who spoke to the inspector and who responded to Parent View and the nursery's own survey are overwhelmingly positive about how well the nursery ensures their children's progress, safety and well-being.
- The local authority recognises the nursery's effectiveness and so gives it support only when requested. An annual meeting ensures that the local authority checks on the nursery's performance periodically. The local authority is currently supporting the nursery's application to become a teaching school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body carries out a check every year to ensure that it is effective in supporting the nursery's planned improvements and in challenging it to do better. Governors attend regular training to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills that they need to evaluate the nursery's performance. They have a clear view of the progress children make in all areas of learning. They use the information to set realistic, challenging and relevant targets for improvement for the nursery and for staff performance. The information is used to decide whether to award a pay rise. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, including those relating to safeguarding.

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	110593
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	425185

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gloria Reed & Jean Webb (Joint Chair)
Headteacher	Rikke Waldau
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2010
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