

The Fields Children’s Centre

Galfrid Road, Cambridge CB5 8ND

Inspection dates

28–29 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, leaders and governors share a passion for early years education that leads them to provide the best they can for all the children who attend the nursery school.
- Children make rapid progress because they benefit from a rich and varied curriculum that stimulates them and extends their thinking.
- One of the features of the outstanding teaching is that all adults who work with the children are highly skilled at questioning them and deepening their understanding.
- The most able children are given harder work to do that enables them to reach high standards of attainment.
- Leaders have successfully diminished differences between the achievement of boys and girls by addressing the needs of boys very specifically.
- The nursery school caters extremely well for those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Individual programmes of support ensure that these children make the progress they should.
- Children’s behaviour is impeccable. They learn the routines of the nursery school very quickly. All adults are consistent in managing the children so that children feel safe, cooperate well and make the most of their time in nursery.
- Governors offer a wide range of skills to support the nursery school. They provide a very good level of challenge and know what the nursery does well and how it can improve even further.
- While nursery staff make very frequent and detailed observations of children at work, they do not necessarily record what next steps would be helpful to move children’s learning on further.
- The attendance of some children is excellent. This is not celebrated enough. Nursery staff work hard to support those families who struggle to get their children to school, but recognise that attendance could be even better.
- Parents are delighted with the nursery school and how their children thrive.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Record the next steps to move learning forward when undertaking routine observations of children at work.
- Celebrate the excellent attendance of some children and develop the work with those families whose children do not attend enough so that overall attendance improves.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leaders have a passion for early years education and this is reflected in their pursuit of excellence in all areas of the nursery school. The senior team has a wealth of experience and expertise and keeps up to date with the latest research. This means that their provision remains innovative and fresh, giving children a first-rate deal.
- The nursery school has an outstanding team of practitioners, including teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants, all of whom know how to bring the best out of children. They are trained extremely well. Regular supervisions celebrate their strengths and enable them to develop areas to become even more effective. At the previous inspection, the school was asked to extend and increase the opportunities for children to talk about what they are thinking and doing during activities. All adults are now highly skilled at drawing out children's thinking through probing questioning and sensitive intervention.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are 'hands on' and spend much time working with staff and children. This gives them a very clear picture of what the school does well and how it can build on its previous best. They plan ahead, particularly in the light of funding uncertainty, seeking innovative solutions that in no way reduce the quality of the provision children receive.
- The school succeeds in its aim of 'meeting the needs of all'. Each child is treated as a unique individual and programmes of support enable all children to access the varied and rich curriculum in purposeful ways. The school spends its funding for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities extremely well. For example, a speech and language specialist works with the many children who have difficulties in communication so that they are not held back in their development. There is also excellent support for vulnerable children to develop their personal, social and emotional skills.
- The nursery receives a quarter of what a primary school would receive through the early years pupil premium. Despite this, leaders make extremely effective use of their limited funds to support the school's many disadvantaged children. This includes play therapy and behavioural support. Nonetheless, leaders also supplement the additional funding through their highly efficient use of scarce resources to make sure that no child is left behind.
- At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to monitor the progress of the most able children with the same rigour as for other groups of children. This they have done. The school's most recent data shows that the most able children are making rapid progress from their starting points and that already some are reaching standards expected of children at the end of the Reception Year, 18 months ahead of what is typical.
- Leaders keep detailed and easy-to-follow records of how well all groups of children are doing. They have been successful in diminishing previous differences in the performance of boys compared with girls. They have ensured that the curriculum, while appealing to girls, meets boys' needs extremely effectively.

- Much care goes into designing a vibrant and stimulating early years curriculum that is tailored to the needs and interests of the children. Daily review meetings ensure that all staff respond to the day's learning and plan new activities that build on children's achievements.
- The school promotes children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding extremely well. All major festivals are celebrated, and children are encouraged to share what is special in their culture. The school's focus on universal values that include British values means that children are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, a display of diverse family units under the heading 'different families, same love' brings home the inclusive nature of the school.
- The curriculum for the outdoors is a particular strength of the school. Children flourish in the spacious and well-resourced outside area, benefiting from well-chosen and engaging activities that stretch all areas of learning. In particular, the unique 'forest school' approach introduces children to the appeal of the wild in a structured safe way. Activities include digging for mud, ascending and rolling down the hill, climbing trees and sitting round the camp fire eating hot dogs.
- Visits to the zoo and environmental walks give children an understanding of the world beyond the nursery school. A succession of visitors, including Greek and Irish dancers, an Antarctic scientist and a performance poet, widen their cultural horizons.
- The local authority keeps in touch with the school and makes use of its considerable expertise to benefit other early years settings in the areas of special educational needs and equality.
- Parents are very positive about the nursery school. Speaking for many, one said, 'The Fields is such an amazing nursery: I can't imagine a better place!' Parents commented on how helpful and friendly staff were. One said, 'Everyone knows who you are.'

Governance of the school

- Governors bring a wealth of skills to the nursery school. They are highly effective at holding senior leaders to account and keeping abreast of developments.
- The governor with responsibility for safeguarding does regular checks on procedures and the single central record and reports to each governing body meeting.
- Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and how it can improve further. Through their regular visits, they build up a clear picture of children's experiences and test out the impact of policies, such as the whistle-blowing policy.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture where children's safety is paramount. All checks on recruiting staff are carried out and files are complete. The school's single central record is up to date and meets all requirements. All staff are fully trained and aware of the latest guidance, including 'Keeping children safe in education 2016'.
- Staff have had the 'Prevent' duty training. There are excellent links with family workers in the children's centre and other agencies. Records of concern are kept meticulously.

The school engages extremely well with parents and others to ensure that children are kept safe at all times.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now consistently outstanding. This is because all teaching staff know the children so well and plan specifically with individuals in mind. By so doing, teachers ensure that activities fire children's imaginations and stretch their understanding, giving them a real thirst for learning.
- Following the previous inspection, the school was asked to provide harder work for the most able children to show that they could do even more. Teaching staff make sure that the most able children, including the most able disadvantaged children, are fully challenged. For example, a child was encouraged to make up his own treasure map on seeing a 'treasure chest' buried in the sandpit. The child was asked to explain how the pirates would find the treasure. He said, 'X marks the spot!'
- Children are encouraged to tell 'helicopter stories' from their imagination (named after the story by Vivian Gussin Paley, 'The boy who would be a helicopter'). The stories of the most able children are more complex. They are encouraged to retell and scribe them and they are published and on display for others to enjoy.
- At the start of the day, children come happily into the nursery school and settle quickly to a wide range of activities, both inside and outside. They self-register. Some children already recognise their names, while others have photographs to prompt them. Particular children are encouraged to plan their day using photographs and to say how they will engage with a specific activity, such as water play. These children have a clipboard with the activities listed or wear a sticker as a reminder. This helps them to organise their time efficiently.
- Staff use innovative approaches to assessment to help them understand the child's point of view. For example, they give children a camera and invite them to take six pictures of what interests them and to talk about them. When a child returned with a picture of a blank wall and said it was an interesting display, teachers were alerted to the fact that not all displays were at a child's eye level!
- Staff undertake many detailed observations of children's learning, record these carefully and discuss them at review meetings. The observation form does not currently include an opportunity for staff to add the next steps if appropriate, to show how they will move learning on.
- Through probing questioning and being alert to what is interesting to children, teaching staff help them to deepen their understanding and make new links in their learning. For example, some children had rigged up a pipe which they said was 'pumping fuel into a rocket ready to launch'. The adult asked, 'What else do we need for our journey into space?'
- The nursery school encourages children to become independent. They are expected to 'suit and boot' themselves before going to the 'forest school' and to tidy away toys correctly. They are trusted to cut up the fruit for snacks using knives safely. Children

love playing in the mud, adding water to create more, and painting with mud. For many, this is a highlight of their day.

- The nursery school has many opportunities for children to become familiar with text and inviting places for them to read books. At different points in the day, a child rings a bell and announces, 'It's story time!', which is when children can choose to sit with an adult to enjoy a story in a small group. Some of the most able children recognise text and speech patterns. They were able to read to the inspector and begin to sound out words.
- Children have many opportunities to develop early writing. Mark-making is an important feature of the work of the nursery school. As well as dedicated writing areas where children can write in a range of books using a variety of materials, many of the activities include a writing option. For example, children were making signs for the wildlife garden in the 'forest school' area.
- The nursery school develops children's early numeracy skills very well. They learn counting rhymes and often order and scribe numbers. A child was placing and measuring 'snakes' in a number line to see how long they were. When the Antarctic scientist came in to visit, children were measuring themselves against penguin cutouts and discovering that some penguins were bigger than they were.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress because the teaching is geared to their specific requirements. Staff liaise very closely with parents and ensure that children's needs are fully met.
- The many children who are learning English as an additional language achieve very well because they are given all the support they need. They benefit from a programme that extends their vocabulary and introduces them to an electronic 'translation dictionary' which tells them the names of objects in their home language as well as in English. A parent commented, 'We can't believe how fluent in English she is.'
- Disadvantaged children also achieve very well. All staff know their needs and the pupil premium is used highly effectively to support them. Most-able disadvantaged children are given demanding tasks that enable them to make the rapid progress they should.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The nursery school's work to promote children's personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Children feel safe in the nursery school and grow in confidence quickly. A parent commented, 'It has helped her to develop her own personality and really brought out her confidence and sense of adventure.'
- As soon as they start school, children understand the routines and expectations of the nursery. They settle very quickly and become respectful and considerate, willing to share and to help tidy up after themselves. This is because all staff are consistent in reinforcing the high values and expectations of the nursery school.
- The 'key worker' system ensures that each child has a trusted adult they can turn to, who makes a point of getting to know the child really well. These adults spend portions

of each week working with their key children and building up a comprehensive picture of their achievements and interests.

- Staff give children a wide range of memorable experiences, some of which inspire 'awe and wonder', such as chicks hatching, and playing African drums. Because the curriculum builds on children's interests and aspirations and staff know them so well, children make rapid progress as individuals. One parent said, 'He has really blossomed as a character.'
- Children who stay for lunch eat healthily in small 'family' groups. They learn to use a knife and fork correctly, serve one another and clear up after themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding.
- Children are content and sustain concentration because they find the learning so interesting. Adults are always on hand to offer support or to extend them, so there is never a dull moment.
- The nursery school has many special places where children can snuggle up with a good book or socialise together, including a large playhouse in the grounds. Thought has gone into arranging resources to promote conversation. For example, the benches are placed opposite one another in the playground.
- All adults set an excellent example to children about how to treat one another with respect. They manage children's behaviour subtly and effectively, stressing the positive and including children in making decisions.
- Resources in the classrooms and outside are easy for children to access safely, so that they can take out what they wish to use without fuss. Children have been trained not to see tidying up as a chore but as a necessary skill and part of learning.
- Many of the children attend extremely well. The school has recognised that it could do more to celebrate their achievement and encourage others to come to school as often. Staff work hard to support those families whose children miss too much school.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Children make outstanding progress from their different starting points.
- Children who left the nursery school in the summer of 2016 reached attainment typically expected for their age or better in all areas of learning, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children enter Reception in the primary school ready to learn and with well-established positive attitudes.
- Learning journeys reveal the scope and breadth of the curriculum and how well children engage with it. They provide a very useful record of each child's progress over time.
- Children who have not accessed the day care offered by the children's centre often join the school with skills well below what are typical for their age. These children make particularly rapid progress and attain as well as those who have already benefited from

the day-care provision, which is run by the same leaders and governors as the nursery school.

- The school's information for current children shows that there are no differences between the performances of groups of children. A previous difference with boys has now diminished and boys are performing as well as girls.
- The school tracks the progress of its most able children closely and leaders make sure that these children are given harder work to do so that they make the rapid progress they should. Current attainment information shows that many of these children are well ahead of what is typical for their age.
- Disadvantaged children, including the most able disadvantaged children, achieve very well because the additional funding is extremely well spent on meeting their needs in supporting and challenging them.
- Children who are learning English as an additional language pick up the basics quickly and develop a wider vocabulary because of the focused support they receive. Staff take every opportunity to encourage them to talk in English and their home language.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as all children because their needs are identified early and they receive special programmes of support. Staff check regularly on their progress and keep parents very well informed about how they are doing.
- The nursery school gives children an excellent grounding in the basic skills they need to be curious and successful learners. Each activity has a clear learning purpose and children have every opportunity to apply the skills they are acquiring in a wide range of different contexts, both inside and outside. Staff are highly skilled at drawing out their learning and encouraging them to think more deeply about the activities they have chosen.

School details

Unique reference number	110593
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10019178

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gloria Reed
Headteacher	Rikke Waldau
Telephone number	01223 518 333
Website	www.thefields.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	office@thefields.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 December 2013

Information about this school

- The nursery school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The nursery school shares its site with a children’s centre and day-care provision, both of which are run by the same headteacher and governors that run the nursery school.
- Around half the children are from multi-ethnic backgrounds. The largest single group is Polish.
- Just under half the children speak English as an additional language, which is high.
- The proportion of children supported by the early years pupil premium is high.
- The proportion of children who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.

- The nursery school is a leading partner in the Cambridge Early Years Teaching School.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classrooms and the outside learning spaces. Some visits were conducted jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector observed small groups of children being taught.
- The inspector looked at work in children's books (learning journeys) and listened to children read.
- The inspector observed children in other activities and as they moved around the school and site.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers, other staff and governors. The inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The views of 15 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspector also held informal discussions with parents.
- The inspector looked at a range of school documents and information. These included the school's development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body and children's behaviour and attendance records. The inspector also looked at arrangements for safeguarding procedures, including relevant records.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017