

Inspection of an outstanding school: Huntingdon Nursery School

Ambury Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 1AD

Inspection dates:

30 March 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children flourish at Huntingdon Nursery School. Relationships are positive. Children are happy and develop confidence in their learning and in their play. They know that adults listen and are there to help them.

When they join the nursery, children quickly learn the routines that help them develop the independence and determination to do things for themselves. This includes the youngest children. Children participate well in games with their friends. They delight in retelling and adapting stories and rhymes as part of their play. They enjoy practising counting when they are organising their snack.

Children are friendly and polite. They share resources willingly and learn to take turns. Children learn to manage their emotions and their behaviour. Children are well supported to develop the strategies that are helping them to be successful in school. Children are well prepared when they move on to primary school.

Parents say they feel welcomed as members of the school community. They value the school's caring ethos and the positive start this gives each of their children. Parents appreciate the opportunities to meet and share with other parents through the workshops and activities that are organised for them between the school and the children's centre.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Children experience a curriculum that is ambitious and supports their learning and development well. Staff are knowledgeable and experienced. They share a deep understanding of how children learn, and the steps adults need to take to develop children's knowledge and understanding. Learning indoors and outdoors is well organised and purposeful. Leaders have worked with staff to develop the curriculum so that it

reflects the expectations of the revised early years framework. Leaders and staff are now reviewing the school's approaches to assessment. This work is at an early stage. Leaders are mindful that children's early experiences have been impacted by the pandemic. Leaders have rightly prioritised the development of children's language and communication, and their personal, social and emotional development at this time.

Staff interact skilfully with children. They help children verbalise their thinking. Through talking together, children explore and develop their vocabulary and their ideas. Through the telling and retelling of stories, children learn to sequence ideas. Children who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language experience stories and numbers in their home language as well as English. This further develops children's skills in listening and supports their understanding. Staff and children also communicate through sign language. Staff use sign language to clarify expectations and to check children's understanding. This is particularly helpful for children who are less confident in verbal communication, or when children are upset.

Leaders have carefully considered how the curriculum supports children's personal, social and emotional development. Staff are consistent in their approaches to help children regulate their emotions and manage their behaviour. Staff positively acknowledge how children are feeling and help them to develop the language that helps them to talk about their emotions. Staff respond quickly when children show signs of anxiety or distress. Staff work closely with parents to identify how best to support children to build their confidence and resilience to enable them to feel happy and settled in school.

The needs of children who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are quickly identified, and support is put in place. Leaders recognise that there is work to do to systematically evaluate and review the impact of this support in a timely way. This is so that leaders are confident that the right support is in place to meet individual children's needs.

The governing body has recently undergone a period of change and many governors are new to the role. Governors have welcomed support from the local authority and national leaders of governance to develop their understanding of their work. Governors have a clear plan to ensure that through their work they hold leaders effectively to account for the quality of education that children receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is at the forefront of everybody's mind. Staff receive regular training that keeps them well informed. Leaders provide guidance and support for parents to help them safeguard children when they are online. Leaders work closely with other agencies, including the children's centre, to ensure that children and families get the help they need.

Leaders ensure that the relevant pre-employment checks are carried out before new staff are allowed to work at the school. Governors understand the importance of their role to safeguard children and all members of the school community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The revised curriculum is in the early stages of implementation. Leaders should ensure that in developing approaches to assessment, staff assess children's learning and progress in relation to the expectations of the school's curriculum.
- The targets that are identified in the plans for children with SEND are not sufficiently precise. This means that leaders are not able to assess the effectiveness of the interventions or strategies that are in place to support children with SEND. Leaders should ensure that the school's systems enable leaders to plan, implement and effectively review the provision for children with SEND so that leaders can assure themselves that the most appropriate provision is in place and is meeting children's needs well.
- Develop the work of the governing body so that all governors are confident in their role and hold leaders effectively to account for their work.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in December 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	110598
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10211073
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Fay Sharp
Headteacher	Claire Palmer
Website	www.huntingdon-nur.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 December 2016

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed to the role in April 2017 following the retirement of the previous headteacher.
- The chair of governors was appointed in April 2020.
- Since the previous inspection, governors have completed a staffing restructure. This was carried out with the support of the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following areas of learning: language and communication (including early reading); personal, social and emotional development; and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke with leaders and members of staff. Inspectors observed children's learning and their interactions with adults. Inspectors looked at examples of children's learning and their achievements. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, school leaders and staff. Inspectors discussed the provision for children with SEND.
- Inspectors met with the designated leader and one of the deputy designated leaders for safeguarding. They discussed the processes that are in place to report safeguarding concerns and how these are followed up with the appropriate agencies. They reviewed records of safeguarding and records of safeguarding training. They reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of governors on the telephone and met with five members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority to discuss their work with the school.
- Inspectors observed and spoke with children while they were engaged in learning and play throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed the two free-text comments submitted on Ofsted's Parent View. Inspectors also met with parents as they dropped their children to school. Inspectors considered the feedback from seven members of staff.

Inspection team

Katherine Douglas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynne Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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