

Inspection of Huntingdon Nursery School

Ambury Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 1AD

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Outstanding
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This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 ten years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. The school received an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Act on 8 December 2016 and on 30 March 2022. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Every child coming to this nursery school is instantly made to feel welcome. They quickly settle and become a valued member of their class. Adults are very attentive to children's needs. They want every child to succeed.

All children have a means to be heard and listened to. For example, children learn to communicate through speech, use of pictures or sign language. It makes all children feel safe to express their thoughts and feelings. They do so with self-control. They trust adults will help them. Learning happens in an environment which is calm and purposeful.

Children look forward to coming to nursery. They delight in seeing their friends and staff. Close bonds are formed. Children play happily and kindly together. All children follow routines and expectations exceptionally well.

Engaging learning opportunities often reflect the children's interests. Children enjoy their snack time with their key-worker group. This is much more than just having fruit and a drink. It is a crucial daily routine to ensure that all children learn how to socialise, talk, show respect and rehearse previous learning.

Children quickly feel they belong here. Every child gets a regular turn to be a helper. Children love having their birthdays celebrated. They have enjoyed drumming workshops and meeting a local farmer.

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

The school ensures that all children access all aspects of the early years curriculum so they are prepared for primary school. Children, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are provided with meaningful learning opportunities.

Children love the stories they hear and joining in with familiar songs and rhymes. Adults engage in purposeful conversations with children. Children are encouraged to practise new words and phrases. They use ambitious vocabulary adults share with them. There are daily chances for children to practice their counting and measuring, with growing complexity. This helps them to develop good understanding of language and early mathematical concepts.

The support for children with SEND is a strength. Leaders have ensured that there is a sharp focus on setting specific targets and sourcing specialist help. Adults are trained well. They support children with SEND with expertise. As a result, children with SEND achieve well.

Leaders are currently updating the curriculum to ensure that it is tailored to the specific needs of all children. Leaders have set out what knowledge children need to know in the most important areas. However, some of this curriculum development

and training is still ongoing, for example in understanding the world and expressive art and design. As a result, not all staff know the precise knowledge children need to learn at each stage in these areas.

Staff regularly check on any gaps children may have in their learning. Leaders then set individual targets for each child. However, adult interactions with children are not always sufficiently precise, particularly in the areas of the curriculum that are less developed. Sometimes, opportunities are also missed to extend children's understanding further. This means some children do not achieve what they are capable of as quickly as they could.

Children easily access resources to extend their own learning. Predictable and well-practised routines mean even the very youngest children can learn independently. All children demonstrate exceptional attitudes to learning, for example showing great perseverance when faced with new learning.

Children demonstrate collaborative behaviours which are impressive for their age. Children are explicitly taught how to turn take, share, have good manners and listen. Consequently, disruption to learning or play is extremely rare. If it does happen, adults deal with it swiftly and effectively.

Children are encouraged to share festivals linked to their heritage. Any discriminatory behaviour is managed appropriately. Children like to share their native language and traditions. They have an early understanding of democracy promoted through, for example, voting for books they would like to read. They know it is fair that everyone gets a turn to be a helper.

Staff are hardworking and caring. They appreciate being part of the school and being able to talk to leaders openly.

Governors are keen to support the school. They attend meetings regularly. However, they are not yet as effective as they could be in holding leaders to account or meeting their statutory duties.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some aspects of the curriculum are currently being reviewed. This means that not all staff are fully aware of the detailed knowledge they need to teach at what stage in a few curriculum areas. This limits how well-prepared children are for the next stage of their education in these areas. Leaders need to complete this work

as soon as possible and ensure that all staff know explicitly the depth of knowledge children need to achieve these updated curriculum expectations.

- Some activities or interactions with children are not always precisely matched to their specific learning needs. This means some opportunities to develop children's knowledge are not maximised or learning is not extended further. Leaders need to continue to provide bespoke training to all staff to ensure that all learning opportunities address specific gaps and extend children's understanding.
- Governors are not fulfilling their statutory duties as well as they could. They are not holding leaders well enough to account or monitoring safeguarding processes with sufficient rigor. Governors should ensure that they source appropriate support to gain the expertise needed to fulfil their strategic and statutory roles effectively.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	110598
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10268053
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	82
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Neil Hateley
Headteacher	Claire Palmer
Website	www.huntingdon-nur.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 March 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The nursery school does not use any alternative provision.
- Children attend the nursery either part-time (mornings or afternoons) or full-time (all day).
- The nursery school caters for children aged 2 to 5.
- The school shares a site with a children and family centre.
- There is no school run before- or after-school provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; mathematics; and the expressive arts. For the deep dives, inspectors spoke to senior leaders, visited classes, visited the outdoor learning areas, observed learning, spoke to children, looked at children’s work and spoke with teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors also looked at documentation relating to the curriculum in other curriculum areas.
- The lead inspector spoke with the local authority school improvement partner via telephone.
- The lead inspector spoke to the chair of governors and four other members of the governing body.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school’s own self-evaluation and school improvement plan. They also reviewed local authority advisers’ notes of visits and minutes of governors’ meetings.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children’s interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses gathered through Ofsted’s online survey for parents. There were 8 responses to Ofsted Parent View, which included 5 free-text comments. One of the inspectors also spoke to parents at the school gate and met one parent in school.
- There were 13 responses to the staff survey. As children are nursery age, they did not complete a survey. However, inspectors spoke to several children during the inspection and observed all children in their learning environment at different times during the day.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Joan Beale

Ofsted Inspector

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