



Histon Early Years Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110595
Local Authority CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number 288714
Inspection dates 26–27 February 2007
Reporting inspector Joy Richardson

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	New School Road
School category	Community		Histon, Cambridge
Age range of pupils	3–4		Cambridgeshire CB4 4LL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01223712075
Number on roll (school)	80	Fax number	01223712075
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jacqueline Wade
		Headteacher	Mrs Carole Faulkner
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2001		

Age group 3–4	Inspection dates 26–27 February 2007	Inspection number 288714
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Most children come from the villages of Histon and Impington and the nursery is oversubscribed. Children attend either morning or afternoon sessions for three terms, from the September after their third birthday. They usually go on to the nearby infant school in September when they are four. When children start in the nursery, most have skills that are well developed for their age. A few children are of minority ethnic heritage. Almost all the children speak English as their first language. A number of children have learning difficulties and disabilities, and a few have a statement of special educational need. The nursery was designated an early excellence centre in 2002. In 2005 it became a children's centre, providing nursery education, childcare, family learning and a base for outreach work in other communities and with traveller families. The centre is housed in new and refurbished buildings and the staff has expanded significantly in the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The centre provides outstanding nursery education. This confirms the centre's rigorous evaluation of its own performance, and parents' views about the nursery which were summarised by one comment, 'simply wonderful'.

At the heart of the nursery's success lies a deep understanding of how children learn and develop. Every aspect of the nursery's organisation and environment is crafted with children in mind, to feed and satisfy their natural desire to learn. As a result, children 'own' the nursery, immersing themselves in activities and delighting in what each new day brings. They understand the routines and enjoy playing their part, for example, in washing down the easels, sweeping up the sand, or handing round the daily fruit snack. The staff are extremely skilful in helping children to explore, to gain new skills and to practise them for a purpose. They listen carefully to children, helping them to make sense of what they see and experience. The children's use of language is richly developed through activities that prompt thinking and sharing with others.

Children make progress rapidly over their time in nursery, reaching high standards in all the areas of learning, including their personal development. As a result of excellent teaching and care, they become confident and enthusiastic learners. All this lays broad and strong foundations for the next stage of their education. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities flourish because of the support and attention they receive and the nursery's sensitive understanding of their needs.

Each child is respected and valued as an individual who is also part of a family. The centre works extremely productively with parents and carers, supporting them to make the education and care of children a joint endeavour. Children's progress over their time in the nursery is recorded with great care, and parents appreciate the insights this provides into the pace and pattern of learning.

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher provides exceptional leadership with a clear vision that has children at the centre. The development of the nursery school into an early years centre has been extremely well managed. Children's progress is monitored very effectively and in great detail. Information is analysed to highlight where learning could be extended, and the nursery is now developing imaginative ways of fostering early skills in calculation and in the linking of sounds and letters. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored effectively. Plans are in hand, with an expanded staff, to build in more opportunities for staff to observe each other at work, and to contribute their ideas about what could be even better.

The centre has developed in many ways since the previous inspection and demonstrates a strong capacity to continue to improve. It gives excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for all staff to observe teaching and learning across the centre and to contribute their ideas for further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children achieve extremely well because their learning is nurtured so effectively. By the time children leave the nursery, they are well on their way towards the early learning goals for the end of Reception, in all the areas of learning. Their personal, social and emotional development is excellent. They learn to look after themselves and to work and play independently and sociably. They gain a love of books and stories, and begin to identify words and letters, alert to the written language around them. They recognise their name and many can write it. They enjoy counting, often to 20 or beyond, and begin to calculate, for example, quickly working out how many children are absent. Their knowledge and understanding of the world develops exceptionally well because they are encouraged to observe, investigate and take a lively interest in the world around them. They paint, draw and make models, confidently developing their own ideas and manipulating tools and materials with practised skill. The children make daily use of the outdoor area for a good range of physical and imaginative play activities. There are plans to extend provision further and to allow access to this area throughout the day.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children develop extremely well as people, growing in spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. They take responsibility for tidying up, and become competent in putting on shoes and coats. They learn good manners, as in remembering to say 'thank you', and eating properly at lunchtime. They relate easily to adults and to other children, often engaging in conversation as they play, and learning to share and take turns. They make their own choices and co-operate readily in groups. Children become absorbed in activities and sustain their interest for long periods. They have plenty of opportunity to wonder at the natural world and are intrigued to see how plants grow over time. They learn about different ways of life, for example, celebrating the Chinese new year with a wide range of activities, including shopping for Chinese foods and writing Chinese characters. Children hugely enjoy their learning and take great delight in what they can do. They eagerly help out with jobs such as tidying up. The nursery takes part in village activities and children learn about the needs of others beyond the centre, including helping to raise money for charity. Children learn about eating healthily, enjoying a wide range of fruit and vegetables, and nutritious lunches. They keep safe, while being encouraged to explore and test their skills, as when children worked out how to hammer nails into wood without bending them. Children love coming to the nursery and attendance is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. The staff plan together very well, so that children in each of the two classes, whether attending morning or afternoon sessions, have the same access to learning. Teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants work together very effectively as a team. The nursery is calm and extremely well organised. Resources are carefully and imaginatively selected to provide purposeful activities that engage children's interest and extend their skills. Planning at the start of the session ensures that children understand the activities on offer. They move freely around the nursery but do not flit between activities; they generally sustain their concentration and are happy to work independently or with others. The staff allow children to make choices and to pursue activities at their own pace, while encouraging them to try new things and ensuring balance in their learning. Group sessions are very well led, providing much opportunity for discussion and the fun of participating actively with others. Songs, rhymes and stories are used very effectively to reinforce learning, for example, about numbers and letter sounds, and about planting and growing seeds.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The nursery offers a rich and broad curriculum that gives excellent coverage of all the expected areas of learning. The curriculum is very carefully planned so that children learn at first hand, using all their senses to do this. The centre gives parents information about ways to support learning, for example, suggesting a visit to a garden centre in preparation for a topic on growing. This means that the curriculum is extended beyond the classroom and learning flows between home and school. Visits by the nursery's teddy bears are imaginatively recorded, and children pore over the tales of adventure that are brought back into school. The children go on visits that enlarge their understanding of the world, for example, visiting a local car rental garage to find out what people do there. Children have very good access to computers and interactive whiteboards, and a visiting teacher supports staff and children in making full use of excellent resources. The children use a digital camera independently to record things that interest them. Weekly sessions with a music specialist further enrich the curriculum and are much enjoyed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is exceptional. The provision for toddler and parent groups introduces children to the centre from an early age and reinforces the family atmosphere. Preliminary visits by children, home visits by staff, full exchange of introductory information and staggered entry to the nursery all help children to

settle easily. Each child has a key worker; this provides continuity and security for children, and reassurance for parents. The school communicates extremely well about children's progress, in reports and consultations. Photographs and transcripts of what children have said and done are enjoyed by children and shared with parents. Families are supported through family learning events where children and parents take part together, and parenting classes are also highly valued. Throughout the centre, clear and effective procedures are followed to ensure children's health and safety. The centre provides excellent support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities, including some who come from a distance and whose families are supported by outreach workers. Traveller families are also supported very effectively to help their children benefit from pre-school education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership underlies all that the centre achieves. The headteacher gives strong professional leadership, within and beyond the centre, based on a clear understanding of children's needs and the family context. An expanded senior management team provides effective management of each area of the centre's work. The headteacher is thorough and insightful in evaluating the centre's work and how it can be developed, taking the views of parents and children into account. Opportunities to observe and to share good practice are being extended to harness the efforts of all staff in exploring ways to improve teaching and learning. The centre is strongly committed to the continuing professional development of all staff. It forges very effective links with external agencies and other nurseries. The governors are highly supportive and extremely well informed about provision in the nursery. They exercise very effective oversight of the centre and its plans for the future. The centre is well run and well equipped. It provides an excellent environment for learning.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 February 2007

Dear Children

Histon Early Years Centre, New School Road, Histon, Cambridge CB24 9LL

Thank you for being friendly and talking to me when I came to visit the nursery. I was interested to see all the things you do. You have a lot of fun and you learn a lot too.

There is always something for you to find out about, like what is inside a fruit when you cut it open, or what goes on at a garage. You are getting very good at counting, painting, cutting, sticking, singing, writing and all sorts of other things. I am glad that you love stories so much. Isn't it fun seeing what comes out of the story sack!

I was pleased to see what a lot you can do all by yourselves, like putting on coats and tidying up. I saw you being kind and helpful. You play together well and you are good at taking turns and remembering to say 'thank you'.

All the grown ups look after you really well to make sure you are happy at the nursery. They want to share ideas about ways to help you learn even better.

I think you have a wonderful time at the nursery, and so do the teddy bears when they go home with you. I hope you go on enjoying every minute and learning as much as possible.

Best wishes

Joy Richardson

Lead inspector