

The Fields Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110593
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310354
Inspection date	7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

This inspection of the education Centre 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 on roll	
Education Centre	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Baker
Headteacher	Mrs Gill October
Date of previous education Centre inspection	20 June 2005
Education Centre address	Galfrid Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB5 8ND
Telephone number	01223 518333
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector in one day. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- standards, particularly for more able children
- the monitoring of progress for children with learning difficulties, especially those with statements
- the use of oral feedback and individual children's targets and how staff communicate these to parents.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior leadership team, leaders for areas of learning, teachers, children and the chair of the governors. There were observations of teaching and an analysis of school data on standards and progress and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as detailed in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the education Centre

This is a larger than average sized Children's Centre and Nursery school, where day care is available for children from 8am to 6pm 49 weeks a year. Most children are from White British backgrounds, with a significant proportion from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of children who find learning difficult or who have a statement of special educational need is above that usually seen and a significant minority of children are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The school has the National Healthy Schools Award and an award for promoting the use of information and communication technology (ICT). The school has gained Effective Early Learning accreditation every year since 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the education Centre

Grade: 1

Fields Children's Centre is an outstanding Nursery school and gives excellent value for money. The children get a fabulous start to their education and children of all abilities settle quickly into school life. This is because a really effective partnership exists between staff and parents. One parent summed it up when they said, 'We feel very lucky that our children go to the Fields. We cannot speak too highly of the concern for each child shown by staff and the way each of our children's development is nurtured by them.' Virtually all parents who responded to the questionnaire were very happy with the school and the progress that their children make. The school works superbly to unite the community. For example, a cafe in the centre provides local people with a meeting place where they can share information and find out about available courses. An excellent partnership is in place between the school and other agencies. Children whose speech is a little under developed are supported well by specialists. Music therapy and teaching is used effectively to enhance children's learning. Children with statements of special educational need are supported effectively because specialist knowledge is used well to create programmes for learning.

Children's outstanding personal development is a wonderful strength of the school. This is because all staff are dedicated and give children an excellent level of care, guidance and support. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their understanding of different cultures in society is extremely good. They talked in depth about the Chinese New Year having learnt about Chinese food and traditional stories about dragons. They learn to reflect about their own and others' feelings extremely well. Children contribute to their school community successfully. They raise money for various charities. They behave well because staff guide them very thoughtfully. They have extremely positive attitudes to learning and concentrate well on tasks. Attendance is good and allows children to make extremely good progress in their learning. Children adopt healthy lifestyles exceptionally well, because the school encourages them to eat a good diet and take regular exercise. Children have a particularly good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school works carefully to safeguard children and procedures meet requirements.

Excellent teaching, which involves the use of a particularly good range of methods, is a key factor in children's exceptional learning. For example, demonstration is used very well to develop children's understanding of key skills. This was seen when a teacher showed them extremely successfully how to retell the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, using models of the characters. Children's basic skills develop effectively because teachers knowledgeably explain how to structure and set out work. For instance, children learn how to count accurately because they are taught how use tally marks successfully. Teachers use oral feedback well and so children know how they have done. Group times are used exceptionally successfully when children's achievements are celebrated. This was seen very clearly when children showed their plans and models of Chinese dragons. Children who are learning to speak English as an additional language are well supported so they make extremely good progress. New individual learning plans are structuring their language development well.

Leadership places great importance on adding value to children's levels of knowledge and understanding. This means that children make excellent progress in all areas of learning. Over the last two and a half years, consistently high levels of achievement have been maintained. Children's progress in personal, social and emotional development, communication, physical and creative development is particularly strong. A considerable proportion of children start

school with levels of knowledge, which are significantly below those expected for three-year-olds. They make rapid progress and so standards are close to the expectations for four-year-olds by the time they leave. More able children are challenged well and they attain successfully. Children are prepared well for the next stage of education.

One of the keys to the school's success is the use of a detailed system to track children's attainment and progress. Very thorough assessments are made every term. Detailed discussion about children who seem to be under achieving or those who would benefit from further extension occurs to determine what extra support would be valuable. Children's progress is very thoroughly tracked in 13 areas of learning including personal, language, reading, writing, calculation, knowledge and understanding of the world physical and creative development. The progress that children from minority ethnic groups make is carefully monitored and they progress successfully. Effective support for those children who find learning more difficult allows them to achieve well. The good use of individual education plans mean that strategies to support children's learning are laid out in considerable detail. Occasionally, individual targets for children are not recorded specifically or shared with parents. This means that parents are not always clear about how their children can successfully meet these targets.

Children thoroughly enjoy the many exciting activities planned for them through the creation of an extremely rich curriculum and environment. They say they really like coming to Nursery. One child summed up their thoughts by saying, 'My teacher is really nice and talks to me a lot.' Children have very good opportunities to use information and communication technology because resources are good and activities well planned. The outside area is used extremely well to develop children's skills. For example, children learn about what firemen do to help us through imaginative play and the particularly good use of equipment.

Outstanding leadership and management have brought about very effective improvements since the last inspection. The school has enriched children's days with greater emphasis on the development of mathematical skills. Excellent leadership by the headteacher means that the school's self-evaluation is very rigorous. Provision for gifted and talented children is good and yet, because the senior leadership team is always looking for ways to improve the school, they are keen to make provision even stronger. Governance is excellent and governors are working very successfully to monitor the outcomes for children. The school is in a superb position to continue to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

As a nursery school, the Foundation Stage is completely covered by the Overall Effectiveness section.

What the education Centre should do to improve further

- Make sure that all individual targets for children are specific and shared more effectively with parents so that they can be further involved in their child's learning.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	Education Centre 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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the education Centre work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the education Centre's self-evaluation	1
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 education Centre require special measures?	No
Does this education Centre require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The Fields Children's Centre, Cambridge, CB5 8ND

Thank you for helping me to find out about your school. I enjoyed watching sessions and talking to you. I really enjoyed your singing. You are lucky to attend such a happy and friendly school. Excellent things about your school include the following.

- You make great progress in your learning
- you learn a lot about festivals from other cultures
- you work very well in sessions
- you really enjoy sessions
- your headteacher has really good ideas
- staff work very well to make sessions interesting
- a wonderful partnership is in place between the school and others
- staff care for you very well.

I have asked staff to look at how they can make things even better. I hope that you will help them by listening carefully. The most important thing is:

- making sure that you know what you need to learn and what you need to do next to make progress and that your parents understand how you are going to do this successfully.

Keep enjoying all the things you are learning at Fields Children's Centre.

Jackie Cousins Lead inspector