

Homerton Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110594
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	337528
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Judi Bedawi

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne C Kent
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Lowe
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed three teachers in five lessons or parts of lessons and three qualified play staff in two 'wrap around' care sessions. Meetings were held with staff, governors and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors spoke informally to children and to several parents at 'drop in sessions'. They observed the school's work, including children's work, displays and school documentation, policies, monitoring records and attainment data. The inspectors received and analysed 58 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of the designated Children's Centre on parental involvement and children's learning
- the involvement of boys in writing and creative learning
- the effectiveness of assessment and children's knowledge of their own learning.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average Children's Centre. Only the Nursery provision and 'wrap around' registered childcare for children between the ages of three and four was inspected. Children usually start the Nursery in September with most attending part-time morning or afternoon sessions. 16 children stay all day. Children attend for a year before transferring to Reception classes in different primary schools in and around Cambridge. An increasing proportion of children have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but very few have a statement of educational needs. Most children are White British. A small but growing minority of children are from different minority ethnic backgrounds, with a greater proportion having English as an additional language. A few children speak more than one language and a few have little or no knowledge of English when they start school. The Centre has numerous awards, including, for example, in its national and international work in developing information and communication technology for young children. Since the last inspection, the Centre has continued to extend its work with government and other agencies, for example, the research and development of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy that has contributed to government training materials.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Homerton is outstanding. It provides an exemplary, vibrant start to learning for every child, whatever their ability, culture, home language, individual circumstances or needs may be. Parents are hugely enthusiastic about their children's learning and play experiences, typically saying, 'Homerton is a very special place, everyone is fabulous, from the receptionist and cook to the headteacher!' and 'It is a wonderful environment to learn and grow in, emotionally, physically and academically.' A dad simply said 'If it was 5 out of 5, I'd give it 6!'.

The outstanding and forward thinking headteacher inspires her staff, governors, parents and most crucially, the children to succeed, usually far beyond their own expectations. Staff, following the headteacher's excellent example, are always seeking to move children's already outstanding outcomes on just that little bit more, one of the prime reasons why the Nursery provision is of such high calibre.

Children enter the Nursery with levels of attainment that are broadly in line with age-related expectations, with an increasing proportion having special educational needs and/or disabilities or little or no understanding of English. Children make outstanding progress in all areas of learning, including their initially lower basic skills in reading, writing, calculation and shape. Boys are slightly more reluctant to choose writing and creative activities to express their imagination, preferring more physically active pursuits, but there is virtually no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Children learning English make noteworthy progress, becoming confident and fluent in their speaking and understanding. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress from their lower starting points, due to impressive focused support and early intervention work, so that they are also mostly at or close to age-related expectations. By the end of their Nursery year, almost all are at or above the level expected for children ending their Reception year. A few are at even higher levels.

Excellent teaching, impressive teamwork, the outstanding use of the new assessment system and astute understanding of how young children learn are key to ensuring that learning proceeds at a breathtaking pace and children make accelerated progress. This, combined with curriculum flexibility, ensures that learning through play is great fun and children's personal development, enjoyment and maturity is outstanding. Activities are often initiated by the children, skilfully directed by high level adult questioning, which stimulates children's insatiable curiosity.

Children and families, including those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable are nurtured, with wide-ranging external expertise and support is readily available if

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there is need. As a result all children are enabled to thrive and to relish learning.

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have an astute overview of the Centre's performance, focusing on future developments. Self-evaluation is ongoing and accurate. The Nursery remains at the forefront of the very best practice in extending excellence in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Capacity to improve is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Fine tune boys' early writing skills and develop their interest in creative learning by introducing more topics to interest and involve them in writing creatively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children are extremely happy and have many wonderful learning experiences. They proudly say, 'I learn everything, I can write my name now!' One said 'I know how I am doing because everyone smiles!' Children's understanding of healthy lifestyles is impressive. Children tried hard to hold on to a very slippery avocado stone, as they tasted and learnt a lot about different fruits and the countries where they grow. Another, unprompted, washed an apple before eating it. Children also feel exceptionally safe due to unobtrusive yet watchful supervision. Children assess possible activity risks, for instance when 'building' outside with wood and real nails. Staff ensure children take great care and work very safely in such activities. Attitudes to learning, concentration and independence, so successfully nurtured by staff are outstanding. Children told the story of the hungry caterpillar in their own imaginative words building on the start to the story, By the light of the moon... saying 'the caterpillar popped out with a bang!' Behaviour is excellent at all times, in the Centre and when out and about on visits, most recently to the local Botanic Gardens.

All children make outstanding progress whatever their ability, home language or interests, because they not only rise to and achieve the stimulating challenges set by adults, they challenge themselves to always do their best. This was clearly seen when they confidently used a wide range of new technology in different activities, in and outdoors. Although not significantly impacting on their high levels of attainment, boys do not always choose to do writing or more creative work, such as painting, preferring more active pursuits. The excellent achievement of both boys and girls in all areas of learning and their high levels of attendance, vastly improved in the last two years, prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education. Children's sense of trust, community and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. This is reflected in their curiosity about other countries and cultures and in their huge enjoyment of music, as for example, they continued singing when skipping back to class.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

1

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Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹	1
The quality of children's learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
Children's behaviour	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹	1
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The exceptional staff team work very skilfully to provide children with stimulating and memorable experiences that leave them eager to discover more. Teaching seamlessly extends children's interests and understanding through challenging questioning that provokes clear thinking skills, and activities that capture children's imagination and sense of fun in play and learning. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of children's needs is excellent. Precise early identification of special educational needs and/or disabilities and support for children at the early stages of learning English, or for those needing short term help is swiftly addressed, through very well chosen strategies to ensure that learning never falters and continues to accelerate. Excellent assessment practice is ongoing and outcomes are discussed with the children so they know exactly how they are doing. Children also assess their own progress, for example, by taking photographs. Planning is amended daily to build on pupils' rapid learning.

The very flexible curriculum is precisely adapted, not only to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those learning English, but to address children's many individual, constantly evolving interests. Boys' interest in writing and creative learning is slightly less evident than in other areas of their learning. Nonetheless, all areas of learning are fully covered in lessons, with the outdoor classroom imaginatively used to focus on exploration and discovery. Many trips and visitors enrich children's learning and parents are often involved through, for example,

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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'Dad's Day' and 'Come cook with us' sessions. Children grow fruit and vegetables in a nearby allotment. The excellent and very well organised 'Owlets' childcare provision for those who stay all day, provides many exhilarating opportunities for play. The close attention given to individual nurturing significantly enriches children's physical and emotional well-being.

Pastoral care is outstanding. Parents are extremely positive about it typically saying, 'It has made a huge impact, contributing wholeheartedly to the happiness and welfare of my child and my whole family'. The staff make every effort to eliminate any barriers to learning. Staff do their utmost, through excellent contact and ongoing support for families, to ensure that all children, especially those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, thrive emotionally and academically. Monitoring of safety, behaviour and attendance is exemplary. Transition procedures prior to entry and when children are preparing to move to their next schools are excellent and highly valued by parents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The passion and vision that the headteacher has for very successfully developing groundbreaking early learning provision, is enthusiastically shared by her senior leaders and staff. They all work as an impressive team to sustain the high quality provision and further drive improvements forward. The governing body are fully involved, providing an excellent balance of skills and understanding to closely challenge senior leaders as they continue to extend the Centre's already outstanding work. Safeguarding is excellent and exceeds government requirements. Children check that their own activities are safe, and support for families and children whose circumstances make them more vulnerable is exceptional. The headteacher and governors ensure that the welfare and learning requirements for the afternoon 'Owlets' childcare provision, are fully met. Partnerships with parents are exemplary, considerably enhanced by the additional clubs and 'drop in' activities held at the Centre. Other exceptionally strong partnerships, locally, nationally and internationally continue to expand as the Centre's reputation for excellence, for instance in using new technology, spreads further. Community cohesion is excellent at all levels with ongoing monitoring and evaluation by staff and governors. Equality of opportunity is outstanding reflected in the excellent achievement of all groups of children with no discrimination.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire have exceptionally positive opinions about the Centre. They fully agree that their children are happy, kept safe, lead healthy lifestyles and that leadership and management are good. They also feel well supported to help their children learn and they are well informed about progress because teaching is good. They say learning needs are met and their suggestions are valued. A very tiny number had reservations about behaviour. Inspectors found no evidence to support this view. Parental comments suggest that the overwhelmingly majority regard the Centre's work as being excellent. Inspection findings agree with this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Homerton Children's Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 100 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	86	8	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	52	90	6	10	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	66	19	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	74	14	24	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	50	86	7	12	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	79	12	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	78	13	22	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	38	66	19	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	78	12	21	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	74	13	22	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	76	12	21	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	53	91	5	9	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	97	2	3	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 June 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Homerton Children's Centre, Cambridge, CB1 7ST

We both want to say thank you for giving us such a wonderful time at your amazing Nursery, when we visited recently. We shared a lot of fun and laughter with you and were delighted to see how quickly and how much you are learning. You go to an excellent school and you told us why you love it so much. You like using the computers, the talking postcards, writing, your special books, choosing different things to do, finding out for yourselves and playing. You like the headteacher, and all the grown ups who care for and listen to you so incredibly well, so that you feel entirely safe and happy. You work hard and have many good friends. Your behaviour is excellent, well done!

You make outstanding progress because your excellent teachers make your learning and play exciting, so that you just want to learn more and more. You do far better than most other children in Nursery schools and you know how important it is to come to school every day, unless you are really not well.

The headteacher and your teachers want to make your Nursery even better. I have asked them to:

- find exciting ways to help you boys especially, decide to do more writing and to help you get more interested in creative work and play.

You can all help by choosing more writing activities and using your imagination when making things. I hope you keep working hard when you go to your new schools in September.

Yours sincerely

Judi Bedawi

Lead inspector

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