

Huntingdon Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110598
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	337531
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Lyn Riley

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Hazel Kenyon
Headteacher	Mrs Kay Dimelow
Date of previous school inspection	4 January 2007
School address	Ambury Road Huntingdon Cambridgeshire
Telephone number	01480 375216
Fax number	01480 375217
Email address	head@huntingdon-nur.cambs.sch.uk

Age group	3–5
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Inspection number	337531

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, one of whom looked specifically at safeguarding arrangements. The inspectors visited seven lessons and observed several shorter sessions. Inspectors spent the majority of their time observing learning. They held meetings with members of the governing body, parents and various members of staff as well as speaking informally to children and visiting a toy library session. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including planning, assessments of children's progress, the school's development plan, policies, monitoring documents and governors' minutes. They also took account of 23 responses from staff and 76 responses from parents and carers to the inspection questionnaires.

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

- the involvement of the senior management team with, and their impact on, school evaluation and improvement processes since the previous inspection
- the impact of developments in the use of assessment data systems to track children's progress and outcomes
- children's achievement and enjoyment and the development of lifelong learning skills.

Information about the school

The school provides 15 hours of education a week, on a flexible basis, offering four different options for parents. It accepts children in the term after their third birthday. It serves a housing estate, within walking distance of Huntingdon town centre, in which many families experience challenging circumstances. The nursery serves a culturally diverse area with a growing number of families from Eastern Europe, Southern Europe and Africa. These groups represent more than a quarter of the nursery intake and many of these children are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. A significant number of children have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities, including nine children with statements for long-term, complex needs.

The school achieved Healthy School status in December 2007, the early years ICT (information and communication technology) mark in November 2008 and five star rating from the Environmental Health Agency in June 2009. The school became the hub for the Huntingdon Town Children's Centre in November 2005, and the headteacher is the leader of both settings covering an outreach area of 700 families.

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

This is an outstanding nursery school. Educational provision is of exceptionally high quality because staff work with complete clarity of purpose, excellent teamwork and with a deep understanding of children's individual needs. Parents are full of praise for the way in which their children are encouraged to learn, and also for how the school helps them to support their child's development. The school is also the hub for the Huntingdon Children's Centre and, as such, supports families as a whole in helping young children to learn and enjoy school enormously.

Children join the nursery with wide-ranging starting points in terms of their overall development. Many have significant barriers to learning and start with attainment that is below that typical of most three-year-old children. Staff help children and their parents settle quickly into new routines and relationships. Partnership with parents and other agencies is extremely strong and this underpins and supports the school's exceptionally good levels of care, guidance and support. Children feel, and are, entirely secure. Their understanding of how to lead healthy lives is developed extremely well.

Children make outstanding progress. Most are well placed after one year in the nursery to reach the learning goals expected by the end of the Reception Year in their next schools. Such good achievement results from an extremely well-designed curriculum and excellent planning by teams of teachers, key workers and teaching assistants who, as whole, provide children with a very high quality learning experience. Classrooms are rich, indoors and outside, with imaginative activities and vibrant displays to capture and respond to children's interests. Parents say, and inspectors totally agree, that the staff know each child extremely well and work hard to meet each child's individual needs. Staff can do this because of the outstanding assessment arrangements through which each child's starting points, learning and progress are noted, recorded and used extremely well to plan next steps in development and learning.

The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well and is supported by an outstanding senior management team and governing body. She, the assistant headteacher, senior teachers and governors have steered very thoughtfully and successfully the developments in recent years to strengthen the effectiveness of the nursery school and to embrace work as a children's centre. Each member of staff makes a valuable and valued contribution to the school's accurate, if sometimes modest, self-evaluation process and this has been a significant development since the last inspection. Management systems are exemplary in many ways, as seen for example in the thorough processes for auditing aspects of provision and in the subsequent exciting and appropriate plans for further development. Data on children's attainment, progress and attendance are compiled and used very thoroughly. The school trialled a new system of

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

data analysis last term but senior leaders are unhappy with the depth of information this system provides. The senior Management team are currently looking at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood AcE scales as an alternative system. Promoting equality of opportunity, community cohesion and tackling discrimination are at the heart of everything the school does and its work in these areas is outstanding. It has an excellent capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that data analysis systems provide evaluative information on outcomes for children that can guide planning for groups and individuals and help to accurately demonstrate the nursery school's success.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**1**

The nursery gives children so many opportunities to explore and learn, and their tremendous enjoyment and engagement are very apparent. Children have learned the importance of working and playing safely, for example, by using hand gel before eating and safely putting equipment away when required. All around the nursery, children's behaviour is excellent. They work and play alongside each other in a happy, cooperative manner, sharing equipment and taking turns both indoors and out. The great care taken by staff to help children and their families adapt to new daily routines pays off so that children feel entirely secure in the setting and display very trusting and positive relationships with all adults in the nursery.

Children are sensitively encouraged to try new situations and to experience unfamiliar activities through which enquiring minds and confidence develop so well. The school's strong commitment to early years' ICT results in children developing excellent skills and confidence when using a range of technology, including computers and interactive whiteboards. It is clear that on joining the nursery many children's skills, particularly in speaking and listening, are low. Excellent teaching ensures that skills in speaking and listening, and indeed in all other areas of learning for young children, improve extremely well. Children's readiness to take part in creative artwork, in exploring the material world, in taking part in group activities and in thinking about their own feelings and those of others, demonstrates the excellent way that the nursery fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children are extremely well prepared for their next steps in education because of the confidence they gain here and because of the very positive attitudes to learning that they develop. It is clear from the vast range of experiences and activities undertaken that children make a considerable contribution to the school and wider community. A personal profile is kept for each child and these are a delight to look at with photographs and quotes to show impressive development across all the areas of learning. All children, including those from Eastern and Southern Europe and different parts of Africa make outstanding progress, as do those with special educational needs and disabilities.

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

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Children's attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Exemplary care and attention to detail are paid to planning activities for the children to make them exciting, topical and relevant, and to meet their specific needs and interests. Classrooms are delightful, as are communal learning spaces and the outside area. They are all full of colourful displays and inviting things to explore and marvel at. Sessions are skilfully arranged to balance times for group-work, free-flow from indoors to outdoors and free-choice activities. There are times for structured group work, times for snacks and quiet, calm times that include storytelling and some singing. Movement from one activity to another is calm and seamless and children understand the clear expectations of their work and behaviour. Behaviour management is totally unobtrusive and yet entirely effective. Lunch and snack times are expertly managed to be orderly and sociable learning occasions. Group and circle times contribute greatly to children's social and emotional development. Staff are very skilful in drawing out children's thoughts and ideas and this underpins their excellent progress. Interactions are extremely well judged

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

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

so that children can at times explore for themselves and at other times be guided with timely prompts by adults.

Exceptionally high levels of care, guidance and support are provided for the children in every respect to ensure their well-being. Parents are justifiably confident that their children are extremely well looked after. The achievement of Healthy Schools' status and the 5 star rating from the Environmental Health Agency ensures that provision to support children's health and well-being is exemplary. The school's support for children whose circumstances have made them vulnerable is of the highest standard.

Partnerships with parents and external agencies are strong so that specialist help is sought and provided as needed. Children settle well because preparations to welcome them are so thoughtfully undertaken, in home visits and in other ways. Teachers and helpers are highly perceptive and note frequently, by taking photographs and jotting down what children say, significant moments of each child's progress. These records are used astutely to ensure that each child's learning is moved speedily forward, with no stress and only enjoyment. The nursery is a calm and peaceful environment, underpinned by close attention to detail and a total commitment to the children's care and development.

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?

All members of staff express great pride in being members of this school. They recognise that the headteacher has very high expectations of their work and contributions, and they rise to them. Teachers and support staff appreciate the fact that much has been entrusted to them in terms of generating ideas, taking a lead in auditing aspects of provision, identifying areas for improvement, developing plans and seeing initiatives through. All members of staff, including the administration team, play a part in reviewing the school's effectiveness and driving improvement. Teachers and key workers routinely review their work, consider each child's progress and plan the next programme of activities at regular 'children's meetings', and teamwork is of an exceptionally high standard. Leadership and management have so many outstanding features, for example, in the excellent way that teaching and learning are led; in provision for staff development; in performance management systems; in the smooth day-to-day organisation; in outstanding communication; and in highly effective, if

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

somewhat modest, school self-evaluation. The nursery is a learning community with many members of staff, including the headteacher, undertaking external professional studies in order to develop their skills, challenge their current thinking and keep the school moving forward.

The school's close contact with parents and carers is highly valued by them. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are entirely robust and all required risk assessments are carried out extremely well. The school works exceptionally well with parents and outside agencies to support children when this is required. The classrooms, equipment and resources are of excellent quality, used imaginatively, and maintained to a very high standard of order and cleanliness. Governance is excellent. Governors are knowledgeable, supportive and have worked extremely effectively with the headteacher to steer the school's move to become a successful children's centre. They know the school well and are fully involved in self-evaluation and improvement planning. The school's vision for the future, based on an exceptionally good understanding of the needs of the community it serves, is clear, well supported and is being worked on with much enthusiasm and skill. The school is highly committed to promoting community cohesion and equal opportunities and its work in these areas helps to remove barriers to learning and tackle discrimination highly effectively.

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

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

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about this nursery school and value greatly what it provides for them and their children. They say that their children are happy and eager to come to school and go home talking about what they have done. They say the children even want to come to school on Sundays. They praise the exciting range of activities that staff devise. Inspectors agree completely with the view of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at Huntingdon Nursery School 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 inspector received 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 120 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	82	13	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	79	14	20	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	58	82	13	18	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	80	13	18	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	86	10	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	80	14	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	80	14	20	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)	49	69	20	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	79	15	21	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	77	16	23	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	79	15	21	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	59	83	12	17	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	86	10	14	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



22 January 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Huntingdon Nursery School, Cambridgeshire, PE29 1AD

I visited your school recently with another inspector and saw you painting and drawing, using computers and enjoying bananas at snack time. I also saw you playing outside, riding bikes, climbing and sliding, rolling balls and building lots of exciting things. Many of your parents wrote to say how pleased they are with the nursery; and one said, 'It is a learning wonderland'. We agree: the nursery is outstanding.

All the teachers and helpers work together extremely well to plan activities that are just right for you so that you are happy and enjoy exploring things together. They take excellent care of you and you learn really well how to stay safe and healthy. You are very good at using the hand gel before you eat. You make outstanding progress. You grow in confidence as well as learning so many new things about the world and each other. The teachers help you to learn new words and develop your language so that, by the time you leave the nursery most of you can do the things that are typically expected for your age. You are extremely well prepared for the Reception class in your next school because of your skills, confidence, excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning.

Your headteacher leads the school exceptionally well. She, the governors, and the senior teachers are constantly checking that everything is right for you. They are always looking out for what else can be improved. Staff have some more exciting ideas for the future. Over the last year or two, the nursery has also become a successful children's centre and is now able to run so many more activities for you and your families.

The school has had high standards for a long time but is always looking for new ways to improve. We have suggested that they continue to look at systematic ways to judge and analyse how well you are doing so they can plan new activities for you and have a clearer picture of how well the nursery is doing.

We hope you continue to enjoy school and miss as few days as possible.

Yours sincerely

Lyn Riley

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.