

Cambridge Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104847
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	336375
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Graham Martin

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	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julie Cliff
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed five lessons taught by three teachers and spent 60% of the inspection time looking at learning. They also held meetings with governors, staff, groups of children and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at lesson planning, the school improvement plan, records of achievement, assessment records and 38 questionnaires returned by parents or carers.

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

- how well the centre has developed its child care and nursery provision since the previous inspection
- if assessments show that learning and development outcomes for children are at least satisfactory
- if safeguarding procedures are appropriately effective
- if self-evaluation is accurate and robust enough to promote a satisfactory standard of leadership and effective school improvement.

Information about the school

The school became a Children's Centre in September 2006 and moved into new, purpose-built accommodation in April 2007. The centre provides funded Nursery education for three- and four-year-olds, childcare for children from birth to school age, and a 'one-stop-shop' for families to access advice and support from a range of extended services, including healthcare and adult education. The centre and its child care and Nursery provision serve the local community. Nearly all children are of White British heritage. A high proportion of children, about one in four, has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Nursery class is a designated centre within the local authority for three- and four-year-olds with severe special educational needs. Currently, 13 such children attend the centre. The centre holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People status and Healthy School's accreditation.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory Children's Centre and Nursery school. Children settle happily because the staff are very friendly towards them and look after them well. Parents and carers trust staff and know that they care for their children's day-to-day needs with great kindness. The childcare and nursery settings provide a friendly environment in which children can learn and play. Exceptionally good support services are readily available to parents, carers and families, such as smoking cessation, healthy cookery and parenting skills classes.

The childcare and nursery provision has a number of good features. Children's emotional and social needs are well cared for. Their personal, social and emotional development is good which means children feel safe, behave well and are polite and considerate to others. A good range of enrichment activities interest the children, enhance their knowledge and understanding of the world and their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. The quality of spoken communication by adults with the children promotes their speaking and listening skills well. Mutually trusting relationships with parents and carers mean they are becoming more involved in their children's learning.

In the play rooms and outdoor area, children largely make free choices of activities that interest them. This supports their personal, social and creative development well.

However, because teachers have no formal system for checking that children choose activities to give them opportunities to learn across the whole Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, gaps occur in the development of reading, writing and mathematical skills that limit the rate of children's progress.

Arrangements to safeguard children meet current requirements, although some policies and procedures, such as risk assessments, are not monitored, reviewed or updated sufficiently regularly. School leaders take appropriate steps to evaluate provision, but their evaluations do not always reflect the quality of some aspects of provision accurately. Some weaker aspects of provision have not, in the past, been accurately identified or acted on quickly. Recent improvements in identifying and improving these weaknesses now give the school satisfactory capacity to improve. For example, the setting has taken steps to develop systems for assessing children's learning. Leaders identified the need to implement a manageable system of assessment and are now beginning to make progress. Learning journey records and 'Aspects of Achievement' folders give parents and carers a good picture of their children's learning and progress. However, there is no embedded assessment system that enables teachers to provide the challenge and support for children who are ready to achieve more in reading, writing and mathematical learning. A lack of development of such a system by middle leaders means that the school is unable to check if the performance of the setting improves the

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overall average level of children's skills year-on-year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve children's learning and progress in their reading, writing and mathematical skills, by:
 - ensuring that there are effective systems to check that children engage in purposeful learning activities for their language and mathematical development indoors and outside
 - ensuring that the information gained from assessments of children's progress enables staff to identify gaps in children's learning and devise plans to fill these gaps
 - ensuring that middle leaders work together and take appropriate action to promote consistency of learning and progress for all children across the 0-4 age range in the setting.
- Improve the care, guidance and support of children, by:
 - ensuring that policies and procedures, including risk assessments, are regularly monitored, reviewed and updated.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

3

Children enjoy learning. In lessons they enjoy the activities provided and are eager to take part. They make securely satisfactory progress overall. Their progress in personal and social and creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world is good. In their communication, language, literacy and mathematical development, children's learning and progress is satisfactory. Children enter the setting with skills and abilities that are, overall, well below those expected for their age. This includes a significant number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. By the time they leave, their skills in communication, language, literacy and mathematical development are still well below expectations for their age. In personal, social and emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world, children's skills are at a higher level although still below expected for their age. Staff are skilled at communicating clearly to the children, ensuring that they listen well and encouraging the good development of their speech.

Children's low attainment in reading, writing and mathematics stems partly from many of them having delayed language and number development, but also from a lack of rigour in ensuring that children are regularly provided with the right opportunities to move their skills on more rapidly. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable make the same progress as their peers because of the effective extra support they receive.

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Throughout the setting, children particularly enjoy learning when the activities stimulate and excite them. They behave well and are generally keen to learn, showing particular enthusiasm for physically energetic and creative activities. Nursery children cooperated well in the role play area set out as a medical centre. They were lost in a world of their own as they tended to the needs of the patients by checking their heartbeat and tending to imaginary 'wounds'. Children work well together, often helping one another without reminders from adults. Activities such as painting henna mehndi patterns on their hands during the Diwali celebration gives the children an appreciation of the traditions of other cultures.

The children grow in confidence and are developing independence as they make choices for themselves across the areas of learning, although they are not directed well enough to activities that would promote better progress in their literacy and mathematical skills. Although they are provided with healthy snacks and lunches and have free access to drinking water, their understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle is limited and they often talk about eating sweets or other unhealthy options.

Children make a satisfactory contribution to the day-to-day life of the setting. They make friends readily and establish positive relationships with others. They generally help to tidy up well, though some do not help as much as they could. The children are beginning to learn the importance of contributing to the wider community, such as by taking part in fundraising events for local charities. Children feel safe and secure and know that adults are there for them if they need help. The skills they learn prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and their future lives.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment ¹	4
The quality of children's learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which children feel safe	2
Children's behaviour	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	3

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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The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹	3
	3
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Staff have a secure understanding of the social and emotional needs of children of this age. As a result, they provide activities that are practical and mainly linked to children's own interests. This motivates children to make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in some aspects of their learning. The balance between the adult-led activities and the ones that children choose for themselves is not always appropriate and it is this that leads to an emphasis on activities that promote social, creative and physical development rather than those that enhance language and numeracy skills, both indoors and outdoors. Recent training and the introduction of a system for recording the progress that children make provides satisfactory information about their achievements. However, this new assessment system is not securely embedded. The information gained is not used well enough to plan activities that maximise children's progress and achievement in literacy and numeracy skills.

The curriculum is organised to interest the children and they enjoy a variety of opportunities to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the world, such as their visit to a red squirrel sanctuary, going to the shop to buy ingredients for making a meal and a walk to a local park. Good advantage was taken recently of the snowy weather and the work produced shows what can be done when the children's interests in such events stimulate their writing as well as art. However, this does not happen frequently enough.

Satisfactory arrangements are in place to guide and support the children in their personal development and learning, though more could be done to support the literacy and numeracy skills of children who are ready to achieve more. Staff are particularly sensitive and responsive to the needs of children who are most vulnerable. A number of parents and carers whose children find learning and positive emotional responses difficult said they really appreciated the kindness and support their children receive to help overcome these difficulties.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

3

How effective are leadership and management?

There is very effective management of the services that provide support and advice for parents and families. This is much valued and parents speak highly of the opportunities they have to learn new skills. Nursery staff have been involved in this work, for example, training parents to help with their children's learning at home.

The leadership and management of the childcare and nursery education is satisfactory. Staff have identified what needs improving but the pace of improvement has been steady rather than rapid. Leadership responsibilities have been shared among staff in both the childcare and nursery settings, but there is no clear overview of how this partnership will ensure the right steps are taken to improve the continuity of learning and progress for children aged from birth to four.

Governors provide satisfactory support for the setting. They are increasing their involvement but are not yet influencing its future development strongly.

Leaders promote local community cohesion within the setting and immediate community well. This is reflected in the good relations evident throughout the setting and the respect adults and children show to others, treating children, families and visitors equally and fairly. Wider community cohesion is promoted in a satisfactory way. There is a community cohesion plan, but this has not yet been translated into practice in the way children learn about the wider world. The setting's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity is evident in the quality of pastoral care provided for every child that enables them all to make satisfactory progress.

Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. They include comprehensive child protection arrangements that ensure all staff know the steps to take if they have concerns about the well-being of a child. Risk assessments are in place for activities in and around the setting and for visits, although some of these do not identify all the steps that will be taken to ensure safe practice. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the day-to-day care their children receive while in the setting. Parents are generally pleased with the opportunities they have to become more involved in their children's learning. Although they know they can enquire about their children at any time, the frequency with which parents are informed of their children's progress is only satisfactory. The setting has secure links with outside agencies, such as, the speech and language service, to provide extra help for children with learning difficulties and for those who are vulnerable.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage

3

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers who responded to inspection questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about the setting's work and the efforts of the staff. They made favourable comments about how well the staff care for their children. Typical comments included:

- 'The centre is very welcoming and nothing is too much trouble.'
- 'The staff really get to know the children individually.'
- 'My child enjoys every day at this school and I never have any problems.'

A very small number of negative responses were received but the inspectors agree with the vast majority of positive views expressed by parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cambridge 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 171 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	84	6	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	79	7	18	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	53	15	39	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	61	14	37	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	61	14	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	55	14	37	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	55	16	42	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)	21	55	14	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	58	16	42	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	58	14	37	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	55	15	39	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	28	74	10	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	79	7	18	1	3	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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:	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. ■ 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.



29 January 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Cambridge Nursery School, Bootle, L20 9LQ

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I and the other inspectors recently visited your Nursery. I enjoyed talking to you and looking at what you were doing. Lots of you told me how much you like being there and I can see why. There are some interesting things for you to do and the grown-ups talk with you lots to help you to learn to speak and listen.

Cambridge Nursery School has some good things about it. I was pleased to see that you are friendly with each other and enjoy making lovely pictures and models together. I really liked the white sugar mice you made with long licorice tails and black currant eyes. I also like the way you are kind and behave well. Everyone looks after you well so you feel safe and know who to go to if you feel unhappy or poorly. The way you work and play outside looks fun, especially when you go on visits, such as the one to see the red squirrels. Your parents and carers are pleased that the grown-ups look after you well.

There are some things I have asked the staff to do better. Just before I left I asked the grown-ups to help you to get better at learning the skills you need to read, write and solve problems, particularly when you are counting, looking at numbers and patterns, and playing with shapes. I also asked them to look at how they check that you are always safe.

I know you will continue to enjoy playing and learning at Nursery and wish you well.

Have fun!

Yours sincerely

Mr Graham Martin

Lead inspector

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