

Homerton Early Years Centre

Address: Holbrook Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB1 7ST

Unique reference number (URN): 110594

Inspection report: 10 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders set clear expectations with parents from the start about the benefits of regular attendance. This instils positive habits for future education. Leaders monitor children's attendance closely and work with parents to remove any barriers. They address persistent lateness promptly. Leaders' actions are highly effective and ensure every child can access their full entitlement. A soft start to the day supports parents who have other school drop-offs.

Leaders and staff establish clear, familiar routines that children understand well. Leaders have high expectations for children's social behaviours and act as positive role models. As a result, children play harmoniously and show kindness and respect. They learn to identify solutions to disagreements. Children develop positive attitudes to learning because staff support and guide them to have a go and praise their efforts. This contributes to a consistently calm and purposeful atmosphere where children feel happy and safe to explore the learning experiences available. Instances of negative behaviour are rare because routines and expectations for behaviour are secured from the start.

Leaders ensure staff are well trained to help children recognise and manage their emotions. Staff also make suitable adaptations to help children with special educational needs and/or disabilities cope with daily routines successfully, such as visual cues and signals.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Children's personal development and wellbeing are at the heart of leaders' decisions. All children, including disadvantaged children, benefit from a well-embedded and highly effective personal development programme. Staff's warm and positive relationships with children provide the backbone for the school's approach. Children develop a deep sense of belonging and learn to work and play incredibly well together.

Children learn to manage their personal needs well because care practices encourage independence sensitively. Mealtimes are calm, sociable events. Children sit appropriately at tables and engage in conversation with each other and adults. Children use good manners, develop self-help skills and gain an understanding of healthy choices, for example, as they prepare and select their fruit at snack time. Children help each other respectfully and tidy away their bowls.

Children access a rich range of experiences that broaden their understanding of the world, starting with the local community. For example, they regularly visit the library and local shops and help tend to the local allotment and orchard. Leaders use additional funding well to ensure that all children participate in weekly music sessions led by a specialist. These sessions widen children's appreciation and understanding of music and movement. Children flourish when taking on responsibilities, such as being the Homerton Owl in their classroom. They also enjoy completing tasks that help the teacher, such as changing the sign on the door to let the class know they can go outside.

Leaders celebrate diversity in the school community and beyond so that children learn to

respect and celebrate different beliefs and traditions. They explore different cultures in lots of ways, including through dance and cooking. Children enjoy learning about different languages they may hear around school. Children develop lots of confidence to tackle new tasks and learn the importance of perseverance. These attributes prepare children very well for their next steps.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Overall, children develop the essential knowledge they need for future learning. They become confident, independent individuals with a 'can-do' attitude and a positive sense of self. Children build cooperative social skills, form friendships and play well together. They know to take turns and wait patiently.

Children enjoy sharing books and broaden their vocabulary through meaningful experiences that bring stories to life. They understand that text conveys meaning as they learn to recognise their own name and those of their peers. Children begin to identify initial letter sounds in their name. Younger children and those who speak English as an additional language progress from using single words to forming two- or three-word sentences so they can express their ideas and views.

Disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally progress well from their starting points because of well-tailored support. They achieve their targets and are well prepared for their next steps. At times, some children receive fewer purposeful interactions. This makes it harder for them to make progress through play.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a broad curriculum that meets national expectations. It sets out clear goals that help build children's lifelong skills, such as sewing. Learning is carefully ordered to develop children's knowledge and proficiency over time. Leaders understand what works well in each area of learning and identify areas to improve. Over the past year, leaders have enriched mathematical learning, so children readily talk about shapes, weight and numbers in their play. Children practise counting in meaningful activities such as placing the correct amount of buttons on a gingerbread man or playing hide and seek. Adults build on what children know and can already do. They break learning into small sections to make learning achievable. As a result, the curriculum is typically well taught.

Leaders prioritise the development of children's communication and language skills through songs, stories and rhymes. Interactive storytelling develops children's confidence, understanding of narrative and sentence structure. Carefully chosen books widen children's vocabulary, along with connected activities. For example, growing bean stalks after reading 'Jack and the Beanstalk' enhances children's understanding of nature. Staff carefully organise the classroom to invite children to explore learning across the curriculum. Children practise making marks with different tools. They construct intricate models, paint and

develop their imaginative skills through role-play scenarios. Staff usually support and guide learning effectively, although sometimes they do not consistently engage all children who would benefit from adult interaction.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have high ambitions for all children. They create an inclusive culture throughout the setting. Leaders and staff get to know children well from the moment they join the school. They quickly identify children who may have additional needs or require some extra support with their learning and or wellbeing. Leaders work closely with parents and a range of professionals to ensure that children and families receive the help they need. Staff generally implement support strategies well and typically check how well children are progressing towards their targets. By reviewing support with parents and professionals, leaders ensure that provision evolves as children's needs change. On occasion, children do not receive the most effective support to align with their identified needs. In these instances, this hampers their progress.

Leaders provide carefully tailored support for disadvantaged and vulnerable children. Effective strategies improve children's self-esteem and confidence. Leaders use additional funding to meet the individual needs and circumstances of disadvantaged children. They make sure that disadvantaged children do not miss out on activities that broaden their horizons, such as music and movement sessions run by a specialist. Leaders ensure staff receive appropriate training to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities so they are well equipped to support these children to participate fully in nursery life.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths. They sustain a culture where children experience a positive, welcoming environment. They identify aspects of the provision to improve and share staff expertise across the setting to support ongoing developments effectively. Leaders link professional learning to school priorities so teaching continues to improve and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support. Many staff take up opportunities to extend their qualifications. This helps staff retention and deepens staff expertise and capacity across the team.

Governors understand the school and local community. They make decisions in the best interests of all children. This includes ensuring additional funding is used well so disadvantaged children do not miss out on extra-curricular activities such as specialist music and movement sessions. Governors hold leaders to account for how they manage resources and sustain high-quality teaching. They prioritise extra support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those facing other barriers to learning.

Leaders have positive and respectful relationships with staff and parents. Staff value the approachable leadership team and feel able to discuss any workload or wellbeing concerns.

They know leaders listen and act on these. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and appreciate how well staff know the children and make them feel welcome.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Children arrive excited and eager to explore the wide range of learning experiences available to them. Familiar routines and warm, positive relationships with staff help children feel safe and settle quickly. Children enjoy learning because staff notice their interests and extend them. As a result, children become confident and curious learners. They enjoy stories, rhymes and songs. These expand their vocabulary and nurture an emerging love of books. Children develop early mathematical knowledge and apply this in their play, such as counting with adults while they play hide and seek together safely.

Children show positive attitudes to learning new things. They confidently have a go because they know adults will support and guide them when things are tricky. Children flourish with the positive encouragement staff give as they persevere. They know adults will comfort and help them if they find things hard. Children develop positive self-esteem and progress well from their different starting points. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive help that enables them to learn through play alongside their peers. Vulnerable children and those in receipt of additional funding build self-worth through tailored support that meets their social and emotional needs.

Children's contributions to nursery life are positively encouraged. For example, children proudly wear the Homerton Owl badge as they responsibly help the teacher with classroom jobs such as changing the door sign to show it is time for outdoor play. Children learn about their local community through visits to the library and local shops and by tending to the local allotment. These experiences broaden their understanding of the world and respect for nature. Children develop an appreciation of the arts through specialist music and movement sessions and creative activities. The school celebrates diversity within the community, helping children learn about different faiths and festivals. Children develop positive social skills and understand daily routines that help them form lifelong habits for the future.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure staff skilfully and consistently use the strategies in place to further enhance the experiences of children with additional needs or other vulnerabilities.
 - Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is consistently taught well, with staff proactively seeking out children who engage less readily, to enhance their next steps in learning.
 - Leaders should continue to use their detailed knowledge of the school to drive improvements towards consistently strong standards.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Professor Ken Ong.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, including the special educational needs coordinator. They spoke with representatives from the governing board, including the chair and a representative from the local authority during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with staff and children.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Alexandra Pearson

Lead inspector:

Mireille MacRaild, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Rowena Simmons, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 10 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

103

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

0.0%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.97%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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