

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Fields Nursery School

Galfrid Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB5 8ND

Inspection dates:

6 July 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children come into school and settle quickly. There is a happy start to sessions with singing activities. Key workers know their children well. Relationships are warm and trusting. This helps children to feel safe.

Children behave well. They understand and follow daily routines, for example listening to stories and rhymes and sitting down together at snack and lunchtime. Children play well alongside each other. They learn to share and take turns. Children learn to express their emotions using words or symbols. Bullying is rare because relationships between children are excellent.

Children have time to explore their interests. They engage with a range of indoor and outdoor learning experiences with confidence. Children enjoy forest school activities. These help children to develop their resilience and learn to take risks, for example swinging on a rope or running down a hill.

Adults support children to be ready for their next stage. Recently, children have been learning about the lifecycle of butterflies. This has helped them to understand change and be well prepared for this.

Parents appreciate the support that staff provide to them and their children. One parent commented, 'It is like an extended family.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have high ambitions for what they want children to learn. Their plans identify what children should learn. Much learning is woven through the stories that children read. However, current curriculum plans do not identify precisely enough what children in each

year group need to learn and in what order. Plans leave too much to the expertise of adults to decide what children should learn next. Some staff are better trained at adapting learning to meet children's varied needs than other staff. This means that opportunities for children to excel in their learning are not as consistent as they could be.

Leaders prioritise developing children's language skills across the curriculum. Children learn a range of songs and rhymes. Leaders have ensured that children experience a range of high-quality and diverse texts. Through these, children learn new vocabulary and ideas. Younger children enjoyed reading a book that was developing their understanding of sharing and happiness. It also supported their learning about colour and shape. Most staff interact well with children. They model vocabulary effectively. This helps children to learn and use new language and express their ideas. Some staff are better trained at this than others. Not all staff provide consistently high-quality opportunities for children to learn and practise the important vocabulary they need to deepen their learning and achieve highly.

Skilled staff teach children to recognise letters and sounds. They plan activities to help children to revisit and learn new sounds. This helps them to be ready to learn to read. The school welcomes parents to visit the well-stocked library. Here, they can borrow books and read with their children. Visiting adults read books in children's home language. This helps to develop children's love of stories.

Staff use their knowledge of the early years framework to assess children's learning and development. They know when children are learning well or when they do not understand something. They are quick to identify any children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that children who need specialist support receive this. This includes support to develop language skills. As a result, children with SEND develop their confidence to engage in activities with their peers.

Children enjoy a range of activities that enrich their learning. These include watching caterpillars develop into butterflies and environmental walks. Children experience festivals and other cultures through visitors and trips. These provide memorable experiences for children. They help children learn about the many different lifestyles and beliefs in modern Britain.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel well supported and appreciate that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Governors know the school well. They provide effective support and challenge to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. All necessary checks for adults working in school are in place on the single central record.

Staff know all children very well. They are skilled at noticing any signs that might indicate that a child may be at risk of harm. There are close links with the children's centre staff. Leaders work with them to support and signpost families to other services. Referrals to outside agencies are timely and appropriate.

Children learn how to keep safe. Staff ensure that children can communicate how they are feeling.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' current curriculum plans do not identify precisely enough what they want children in each year group to learn and in what order. This means that there is inconsistency in how well staff deliver the curriculum. Leaders must ensure that all staff know exactly what they need to deliver and in what order. This is to ensure that all children have the very best learning experiences.
- Not all staff are skilled at modelling vocabulary consistently well. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the expertise to do so. This is to ensure that all children have consistently high-quality opportunities to learn and practise the important vocabulary they need to achieve highly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour, or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding on 28 and 29 March 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	110593
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10241626
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lisa Faulkner and Carolyn Purser (co-chairs.)
Headteacher	Amanda Bannister
Website	www.thefields.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 and 29 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school includes care and education for two-year-olds.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of a hard federation sharing its governance with two other local nursery schools.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, personal, social, and emotional development, and mathematics. They also considered other curriculum areas such as expressive arts and understanding the world.

- For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with senior leaders and observed small group activities, both adult-led and child-initiated. Additionally, inspectors spoke with children and their key workers.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record and reviewed safeguarding systems. Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, members of the governing body and children to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). The lead inspector met with members of the governing body. Additionally, she held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents during the inspection, including curriculum plans, records of governing body meetings and school development plans.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents. An inspector spoke with parents who were delivering and picking up their children during the school day. Inspectors also considered four responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, and three free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke with members of staff to gather their views. Additionally, they considered 11 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted survey for pupils. Inspectors observed children’s behaviour across the nursery.

Inspection team

Joan Beale, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

James Chester

His Majesty’s Inspector

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