

Homerton Children's Centre

Holbrook Road, Cambridge, CB1 7ST

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Homerton has maintained its excellence over many years. It rightly has a high profile in Early Years education and is characterised by a fierce lack of complacency and a burning desire to do the best possible for the children.
- Children make outstanding progress and achieve exceptionally well in all areas of learning. They develop their skills through independent learning and have excellent learning habits that prepare them well for the next stage in their education.
- Staff provide an excellent, imaginative range of rich and exciting activities for children. Although there is some excellent practice in teaching physical development, this is not yet planned to ensure progression in skills.
- Teachers' questioning is effective in leading children's learning so that all abilities are challenged appropriately.
- Staff continually seek high quality training that helps develop their practice. A recent example has helped develop the school's teaching of speaking and listening. However, parents are not yet fully aware of how this will support their child's learning or how they can help at home.
- The headteacher provides the school with outstanding leadership based on a clear understanding of how children learn. The school's leadership of the use of new technology has been used as a model across the country and internationally.
- The governing body has supported and challenged the school through many changes. Visits to monitor aspects of the provision are made and reported on in excellent detail.
- There are excellent links with parents and carers. All parents spoken to or who completed questionnaires say how happy their children are and how safe they feel.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine sessions and parts of sessions. Some of these were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, governors, staff, parents, and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions also took place with children.
- Samples of children's work and their 'Special Books' (collections of samples of their work and teachers' assessments) were scrutinised. Some children read books with the inspector.
- Inspectors analysed and took account of the school's past surveys of parental views, as well as the 32 responses to the online survey (Parent View).
- In addition, 17 staff questionnaires were considered.
- The inspector looked at key inspection documents, including performance data produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, self-evaluation work, reports to the governing body and the school improvement plan.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Homerton is larger than the average sized nursery school. There is a range of attendance options for children accessing their 15 hours funded entitlement. Most children attend for a morning or afternoon session on a part-time basis.
- A below-average proportion of children are supported through early years action, but an above-average proportion receive support through early years action plus. None currently have a statement of special educational needs.
- The large majority of the children are White British. However, a growing number start school at an early stage of learning English as an additional language and currently 17 home languages are spoken.
- All children are educated on site. A small number of children have full day care provided by a children's centre on the school site and which is managed by the school. This provision is inspected and reported on separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision for children's physical development to reflect the increased importance of this area in the new Early Years curriculum and ensure that activities are planned more coherently so they build more effectively on prior learning.
- Share with parents recent improvements made to the teaching of speaking and listening, and suggest ways they can support their child's learning at home.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Many children join the nursery with skills and knowledge in all areas of learning that are below those expected for their ages. A growing number have communication skills that are well below those expected for their ages. From their different starting points, children make outstanding progress during the time they spend at the school. This has been a consistent picture over many years. The current data showing children's progress indicates that, from their different starting points, over 90% of the children reached the expected levels for their ages or better.
- Around 40% exceeded expected levels in communication, language and literacy, and for their personal, social and emotional skills. This represents outstanding achievement. Children's skills in using new technology have been a strength of the school for some years and they demonstrate high levels of confidence and ability in using touch screens, digital cameras and programmable toys.
- The attainment of boys has had a high focus since the last inspection and the gap between their learning and that of the girls has narrowed, especially in reading and writing. Examples were seen of play and related reading and writing activities on topics of interest to boys.
- Children from minority ethnic backgrounds make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. So, too, do those who find learning difficult.
- Children enjoy looking at books with an adult and often choose to spend some quiet time in the book corner. In one excellent activity, staff wrote down children's own retold versions of a range of fairy stories, thus creating a home-made reading book. Early skills in phonics (linking sounds and letters) are continually developed through reinforcing the initials of children's names and activities such as the writing of Mothers' Day cards.
- Children make excellent progress in number work. Physical development is ensured through a range of activities but these are not planned to build consistently on children's prior experiences. The outdoor area is used extensively every day. This has a very positive impact on children's physical and imaginative development.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because the staff are very experienced, reflective practitioners. All adults work extremely effectively together as a team, making good use of their individual interests and expertise. A very effective planning system ensures individual children's next steps are appropriate and challenging. All staff are extremely committed to doing the best they can for the children in their charge.
- There are some excellent interactions between staff and children which extend learning. For example, one adult made thoughtful suggestions to help a boy at an early stage of learning English to develop both his language and his cutting skills. Excellent use of external expertise on children's learning is evident in the use of a talented visiting music teacher and health professionals.
- Planning is based on in-depth and frequent assessments and observations of children's learning. This enables staff to target specific activities very effectively. Parents are kept well informed

about children's work at the start and end of every session and through the 'Special Books'. These contain a lot of photographic evidence and samples of children's work in all areas of learning, with some detailed annotations by staff.

- Staff are aware they have a growing number of children with a variety of barriers to learning. Children needing extra support, for example to help them concentrate on a specific task, were observed to receive outstanding support. The staff clearly enjoy being part of the nursery team and working with the children. All strongly agree that they are proud to be a member of staff at this school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The nursery provides a very safe learning environment in which children can happily play and learn together. Parents and carers agree that their children enjoy school, are very well cared for and are safe at the nursery.
- Relationships in the nursery are very strong and this supports outstanding behaviour. Children are very effectively managed by staff in a friendly and unobtrusive way. At the start of sessions, children enter with real enjoyment and pleasure, and settle very quickly into activities with their friends. Children are learning to share and work together exceptionally well.
- Children's self-esteem and well-being is developed through all of the nursery's work. This includes the way adults talk to children and foster their independence and responsibility. For example, one child each day is chosen for special responsibilities. Children respond to this well and are good at tidying at the end of sessions or helping adults at snack time.
- Attendance is promoted very effectively and absences are immediately followed up through telephone calls. Any persistent absence is also addressed by staff with the help of children centre family workers. This is effective in supporting parents and carers build good habits of attendance and punctuality for their children's future education.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since her appointment the headteacher has worked hard to build on the school's existing strengths. She provides effective leadership that is strongly focused on the continual development of the staff's knowledge and skills and on ensuring children's achievement remains outstanding. The development of new ideas in teaching children to talk is an example of this, although the school is yet to fully embed this work or to share it with parents and carers.
- The school has been judged outstanding since 1998. It has been and still is used as an exemplar of good practice in a number of areas, by the local authority, across the country and internationally. The links with Homerton College have also ensured the nursery has a high profile in training new Early Years teachers; staff also model good practice at conferences and training events.
- The performance management of staff is firmly based on the priorities in the school development plans and also on individual professional development needs. Leadership is very effectively distributed among staff.
- The school provides an outstanding curriculum. In addition to the school's day-to-day work, visitors include parents, who talk about interesting topics such as Chinese New Year. Children

regularly go to local outdoor parks and environmental areas, and also take part in growing fruit and vegetables on the school's allotment.

- Outstanding musical opportunities are presented by a visiting teacher and include singing, movement, instrument playing and composing. Although there is also a good range of physical activities, these are not yet planned to ensure progression in skills. All children have equal opportunities to take part in any of these special events as well as in the normal daily life of the school.
- There is excellent cooperation with a range of outside agencies. This benefits all children, but especially the growing number of children whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Strong links with the local authority support a range of training opportunities for staff and governors. The local authority has adopted an appropriate light touch approach to this outstanding school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body's excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, found at the last inspection, has been built on and further developed. Governors have an excellent understanding of the evidence showing how well children are learning. There is a good balance of governors with expertise in early years education and parents who are very committed to the school and keen to ensure it continues to improve. As one said, she felt proud and privileged to be a governor at Homerton. They hold the school to account through a range of monitoring activities, including visits to observe the nursery in action. For example, a recent very detailed observation was carried out of the provision for children at an early stage of learning English. Financial expertise is used appropriately to ensure available money is used effectively. Governors carried out the appointment of the headteacher appropriately and with real thought for the school's continued improvement and success. They have an excellent understanding of the performance of the headteacher and the arrangements for continually improving the performance of all staff. They are fully aware of how this is linked to staff pay and ensure rigorous procedures are used to evaluate the quality of teaching. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding, are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110594
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	401134

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	Anne Kent
Headteacher	Harriet Price
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2010
Telephone number	01223 508766
Fax number	01223 508767
Email address	office@homerton.cambs.sch.uk

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