

Hardmoor Early Years Centre

Leaside Way, Bassett Green, Southampton, SO16 3EP

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders and the governing body have a very clear vision and put a strong emphasis on managing the performance of staff through high quality training.
- Children of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in all areas of learning. Progress in early language and literacy, including in letters and sounds, is good.
- Good teaching ensures that children achieve well in almost all activities. In the best teaching, staff extend children's language and understanding through very high expectations and detailed questioning.
- There has been a very high proportion of unavoidable changes to staffing recently, and as a result some teaching is not as effective as it could be.
- Provision for day care is excellent. Children are exceptionally well cared for so that they are secure and happy.
- The excellent curriculum provides exciting opportunities for children, engaging them very well in both indoor and outdoor learning. Provision to promote their welfare through spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of an exceptional standard.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding. Children are safe at school.
- Parents are extremely pleased with the school and rightly say their children achieve well.
- Through their highly efficient planning and careful controls the governing body ensures the best possible use of the money available, to the benefit of all groups of children.
- The school has very strong capacity to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' questioning skills do not consistently promote the highest levels of achievement for all children.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 sessions, many jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of other short visits to different sessions to observe children playing.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior teachers, day-care staff and the governing body. The inspector also had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative and spoke to a few parents and children.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documents, including the school's own data on children's progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding and welfare information and children's profiles.
- The inspector took account of the 13 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and spoke to six parents during the inspection. Questionnaires were received from 25 staff members.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hardmoor Early Years Centre is an average-sized Nursery school for children aged three to four years old. It is also a registered provider of all-day childcare for children from three months to five years. All aspects are managed by the same governing body.
- It provides extended services for families and pre-school children and is linked to the nearby Sure Start Children's Centre.
- There is a higher than average proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs. The school has specialist provision for six children placed by the local authority for their special needs.
- The proportion of children from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than average. The most common home languages for these children are Urdu, Punjabi or Polish.
- There have been a very high number of unavoidable staff absences in the past year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that:
 - all children make even better progress by developing all teachers' questioning skills
 - all children's language skills and their knowledge and understanding are extended to make sure that they meet the next steps in learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of children, including those who are disabled, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well and make good progress during their time at the Nursery, often from low starting points, so that they attain the skills expected by the time they leave. They achieve particularly well in their personal development and in early reading, writing and number skills. Children happily come to school each day and are eager to see what activities are available in the Nursery's exciting environment. They quickly settle and make friends.
- The good focus on improving children's confidence is evident in the way they undertake simple jobs, eagerly helping to clear away their toys and tidy the classroom. Children are well prepared for their futures as they learn to sit quietly, listen to stories and recognise initial sounds in names. In a group session, for example, children made outstanding gains in learning about rhyme as they found rhyming words for themselves. The strong emphasis on linking letters and sounds ensured their very good understanding of early reading and writing.
- In the day-care provision, very young children regularly share toys, listen to stories, try to turn pages and respond to questions very well.
- Developing independence is a particular focus in the Nursery. Children initiate their own learning, make decisions and share with others well.
- The outdoor area is very exciting. The large play area, along with the woods where forest school activities take place, engages children very well. Recent innovation, such as the introduction of four chickens, is a great favourite. Children take turns to feed the chickens and collect the eggs. Five children showed how they keep themselves safe when doing this task by feeding the chickens a bit of food through the wire before they entered the pen. 'That keeps them busy' said one child. Children label and sell their eggs, often to parents, showing their developing awareness of enterprise.
- Parents are very pleased with their children's progress. 'It is a really lovely school, I feel very lucky to have my child here,' commented one parent.

The quality of teaching is good

- Activities are well planned and organised, with some exciting experiences for all groups of children. High expectations of children's behaviour and engagement are clearly evident. Most teachers are skilled at moving children on to the next steps.
- In the best lessons, questioning is a key strength. At these times, skilled teachers frequently ask children about their learning, seeking to extend children's skills. An example of this was evident when the teacher constantly asked children details about the story they were sharing, extending their language and understanding very well.
- In a very few lessons children's learning is not extended quite as well. This is particularly evident when inexperienced or new staff do not ask searching questions so that all children do not have to think or find answers for themselves. As a result, progress in these lessons dips slightly for some children.
- Children and babies in the day-care provision benefit from bright, exciting resources and very high levels of attention so that they are constantly stimulated and encouraged to communicate or interact with an adult or a toy. For example, one child was observed benefiting from a story. He sat on the carer's lap, helped to hold the book and attempted to turn pages.
- Children's successes in all areas of the school are accurately recorded, often by observing their learning and noting outcomes, and sometimes through photographs.
- Teachers promote children's excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through celebrations of the many different cultures of the children in the school. A Divali celebration, for

example, engaged children and parents in some exciting new experiences.

- Children with special educational needs are taught well. They were able to improve their language skills as they played a word game with the teacher. The very good use of encouragement and resources helped the children to understand what was expected so that they succeeded in recognising and naming picture cards well.
- All staff regularly undertake training to improve their own knowledge, ensuring that they are abreast of the new Early Years curriculum. The high number and wide range of courses provided are helping new staff to quickly improve their skills.
- All of the parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire rightly agree that their children are well taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour is excellent. Children's very positive attitudes and their eagerness to take part in all the school's activities are evident from the moment they arrive at school each day. They are eager to play with others and engage staff. They show their enthusiasm by undertaking simple jobs, such as collecting rubbish, tidying up and clearing away their toys. No evidence of any bullying was seen during the inspection and none is evident in the school's records.
- Children, including those in the day-care provision, show clear understanding that eating fruit is good for them and many children try new or different pieces of fruit daily. They understand the need to wash their hands to keep themselves healthy.
- Examples of safe risk taking are evident in many activities, particularly outdoors. For example, children use scissors safely to cut paper, know the risks associated with feeding the chickens and take actions to keep themselves safe. These activities ensure that children are able to weigh up risks and take good care of themselves.
- Two-year-old children in the day-care provision enjoy eating their lunch in small family groups in the school hall. They show exceptionally high levels of independence as they help to serve themselves, wait for others to be ready before starting to eat and making valid choices from the range available.
- Children regularly help each other and are kind. This was evident in the outdoor area where children know that the bikes and scooters are for sharing. They kindly hand their bike over to the next child when they have had their turn.
- Staff manage behaviour well and there are examples of children who have difficulties with their emotional and social skills improving their behaviour because of specific targets and use of rewards. Parents rightly say that behaviour at the school is excellent.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior leaders and staff have successfully built on previous good provision and outcomes to further improve the exciting environment in which children thrive and feel valued.
- Leaders have embedded an excellent capacity for further improvement through high levels of staff training and by introducing many new initiatives to provide even more challenging experiences for children. The curriculum is very successful in helping children to take responsibility for their own activities and games.
- Leaders at all levels, including in the day care, are fully involved in improving the provision and regularly seek excellence. A very strong emphasis on supporting children's individual needs means that all children, including those who are disabled, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, can overcome barriers to their learning.

A Polish child helping to feed the chickens benefited from adult use of Polish as well as English to explain how to keep herself safe. As a result, she was fully able to join the other children and enjoy the experience.

- Effective use of the 'Teachers Standards' demonstrates the commitment to improving teaching so that staff can develop their skills and seek promotion. High levels of unavoidable long-term absences over the past year have challenged leaders' ability to move teaching forward but through rigorous partnerships and training they are now building firmly on previous good practice.
- Performance is rigorously monitored by the headteacher and senior leaders and is very effectively managed. For example, mentoring and partnerships, between teachers who are new to the school and those who are more experienced, provide strong role models and are helping to quickly improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- There is a very strong partnership with parents, other schools and local support services.
- Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements and give no cause for concern.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - shows very clear strategic direction, promoting a welcoming and challenging ethos through governors regularly monitoring and questioning leaders about children's progress and the quality of teaching. Governors evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement, insisting on regular updates. Members of the governing body are regular visitors to the day care and the school and take an active part in monitoring the quality of support, teaching and learning. They understand the importance of managing the performance of staff and allocate sufficient funding to regular high quality training to ensure that teaching improves. They manage the school's finances very well, regularly challenging leaders to improve outcomes further. Governors use the money allocated for children with additional needs very well to ensure the funds benefit these children. For example, they have used some money allocated for special educational needs funding to buy the services of a teacher of British sign language to support a deaf child, enabling the child to be fully included and make good progress.

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	115831
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	401539

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	0–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Murphy
Headteacher	Karen Stacey
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 January 2010
Telephone number	02380 552220
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