

Knowles Nursery School

Queensway, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK2 2HB

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good because all staff have a secure understanding of how young children learn, activities are interestingly planned and children are keen to learn.
- Most teaching is good and a little is outstanding. Adults have high expectations of the children and usually question them skilfully to move learning on.
- The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching which is managed well through formal and informal monitoring. As a result, all children learn well.
- Behaviour is good. Children quickly learn how to behave inside the building and when outside, and also how to behave when eating their snacks.
- Staff and governors know what the school does well, and have identified clear priorities for improvement. They work effectively together to ensure that children learn and play in a safe and secure environment.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the work of the nursery and say that their children enjoy attending.
- The governing body supports the school well. Effectively planned visits and additional training have improved their understanding of how the school works.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Staff do not always reinforce and develop learning when talking to children.
- Higher attaining children are not always challenged sufficiently.
- Adults have too few opportunities to learn from the good practise of outstanding practitioners.
- Data analysis does not clearly show how individuals and different groups of children are achieving or the levels they are reaching. Consequently, neither staff nor governors have a clear picture of children's achievement or attainment.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with half a day's notice and took place over two days.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and her staff, parents and carers, three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in 12 parts of sessions, taught by two teachers, four early years support staff and two teaching assistants.
- There were too few responses to take account of the online Parents View survey.
- Responses to an inspection questionnaire for nine members of staff were analysed.
- The inspector looked at school documentation relating to safeguarding, parents' and carers' views of the school, information about children's attainment and progress, school self-evaluation and improvement planning, and minutes from meetings held by the governing body.

Inspection team

Nina Bee, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Knowles Nursery currently provides part-time provision for 95 children. The nursery is co-located with Saplings Children’s Centre which is managed by the headteacher and governing body.
- The large majority of children come from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds. Approximately one third are from White British backgrounds.
- Just over half of the children speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported at early years action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- No child is supported through early years action.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that learning is never less than good and more is outstanding by:
 - sharing the outstanding practice already in the nursery
 - ensuring staff always reinforce and develop learning when they interact with children, particularly when children choose activities themselves
 - ensuring that higher attaining children are challenged sufficiently.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - information collected on children’s performance is collated more effectively so that staff have a clear record of how individual children and different groups are achieving
 - governors are better informed so that they have a clearer understanding of entry and exit data, the achievement children make and the levels they reach.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The large majority of children are on course to reach the levels expected for their ages by the time they leave the nursery. This represents good achievement in relation to their starting points which are generally below those expected for their ages.
- Few children reach levels above those expected for their age. Higher attaining children are not always challenged sufficiently during some activities. Their progress is not as rapid as it should be.
- The needs of disabled children and those with special educational needs are clearly identified and they are sensitively supported. Consequently, they make good progress.
- Children who are learning English as an additional language achieve well because in most lessons there is a strong focus on developing language and speaking skills.
- Sessions run smoothly and children are given a choice of activities to choose from. All children are expected to take part as they listen, think and then recall which activities they would like to have a go at. Because relationships between adults and children are generally very good, children feel relaxed and most listen well and have a go at speaking, some with a good degree of confidence.
- Achievement is good in all areas of learning. Children do particularly well as they develop personal and social skills because, in all activities, adults generally expect children to behave, share, take turns and be kind towards each other.
- A small group of children were seen learning well as they made dough with an adult. They happily took turns to do their bit and waited patiently as other children filled cups with flour and tipped them into the bowl. There was much excitement as they watched the mixture change when one of them added the water. It was a real group effort, enjoyed by all, and they just could not wait to start moulding, cutting and shaping the dough they made.
- Transition to Reception is well established. Children are adequately prepared both academically and socially, and have good opportunities to get to know new staff when they come and visit during sessions. In addition, children have planned times when they themselves visit their new school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is generally good or better and results in children learning well. During adult-led activities, children are skilfully encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills. For example, when working with an adult on the workshop bench children listened carefully, answered questions and learnt well as they successfully banged nails into wood. Language was developed effectively as they spoke about the hammer being 'heavy' and 'banging' the nails 'hard'. They were thrilled when they realised they had successfully hammered their nails into the wood.
- All activities are planned to be interesting and children eagerly choose what they want to do. At times, adults miss opportunities to reinforce and develop children's learning when they interact with individuals or small groups. This is more apparent when children take part in activities they select themselves.
- Some learning is outstanding. This was seen while children sat on the carpet and sang their welcome song with their key worker. They showed excellent control, alternating between using loud and quiet voices. All children worked extremely well together, and confidently counted the number present while identifying numbers up to eight. Through thoughtful questioning, all abilities were challenged very effectively and the teacher checked that all understood what they were learning. As a result, children listened carefully, responded extremely positively and remained well focused throughout.
- Learning journals show the interesting and exciting activities which permeate all areas.

Photographic evidence clearly shows that children enjoy learning, both inside the classrooms and in the interestingly resourced outside area. Children have excellent opportunities to run around outside, investigate in the 'stone area' and play in the 'cave'.

- Children were seen learning well as they made music by playing outside with the recently installed large musical instruments. As they talked to an adult, their language was developed effectively. First, the adult reinforced previous learning as the children recalled the names of the instruments. Then, number skills were developed as they counted each sound as they hit the drums. Relationships were excellent throughout and much enjoyment was clearly evident.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Children from many different backgrounds get on well together and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Staff and governors work vigilantly to ensure that whether inside their classes or in the outside play area, the children are kept safe.
- Children behave well because staff usually have high expectations. For example, children were seen confidently deciding what they wanted at snack time. They were given many opportunities to take responsibility such as pouring their own drinks. They confidently decided what they wanted on their sandwich and then sensibly made their own. The adult skilfully developed language such as the 'bottom piece of bread' and then 'the top piece'. While munching on their sandwich children spoke sensibly to each other and the adults who help them about the need to eat healthy foods.
- When children receive high-quality teaching and are totally absorbed in their learning, behaviour is outstanding. Personal and social skills are developed extremely well, as seen when children listened and responded to a story. The teacher expected excellent behaviour, leading to very good listening, looking and not shouting out. The children rose to the occasion, and the outstanding behaviour contributed to the excellent learning that took place.
- Behaviour is not outstanding overall because very occasionally, challenging behaviour is not well managed by adults and this affects the quality of learning children make.
- There are systems to record poor behaviour or racist incidents but few have been recorded recently.
- There are clear procedures to monitor attendance, and most children attend regularly.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and her team are an ambitious group whose main objective is to strive for the best. They ensure that all children are treated equally and that discrimination is not tolerated.
- All staff, including the governors, are involved in school improvement planning. A recent priority was to focus on children's mathematical development. The governors' monitoring role has included visits to look at children's learning journeys to see the impact of this focus which has been successful. Children are currently doing better in their mathematical development than previously.
- Since her recent appointment the headteacher has gained the respect and confidence of the parents and carers and dealt with a high turnover of staff which included teachers and early year's practitioners. While there is a secure system for monitoring teaching, a more formal system, to ensure that all staff are given clear pointers to improve their practice, is in the process of development. Sharing outstanding practice is not yet well established.
- Individual matrices for all staff clearly show that professional development is linked to staff performance management. All staff take part in training opportunities and courses to improve their practice, and have responded well to linking their practice and documentation to the most recent Early Years Foundation Stage guidance.
- The well-balanced curriculum gives children good opportunities to further their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children learn, through play, about different world celebrations.

They understand that not everyone speaks the same language, from listening to each other, speaking in different languages and listening to stories in English and in other languages. Children were seen, for example, confidently saying 'hello' at the start of the session in languages other than English.

- Teachers' assessments give staff much useful information on children's performance. Staff are developing a new system to track children's achievement and attainment. Currently, it does not give them a clear record of how individual children or different groups are achieving or the levels they are reaching.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the education their children receive. Questionnaires, previously sent out by staff, were equally as positive.
- Light touch support has been provided by the local authority due to the school's previous success.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed through frequent, well-focused visits and more training, so are able to support and challenge the school effectively.
 - They are regularly informed through reports from the headteacher and from the well-established sub-committees which make up the governing body.
 - Governors are given basic information about children's performance. However, they are not yet given enough information to be able to gain a clear picture of children's entry and exit levels and the achievement they make.
 - Systems for their monitoring role are well established, for example, they regularly review and question the school's policies and procedures, have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and how it is reflected in teachers' pay, and are involved in the headteacher's performance management.
 - Governors ensure that safeguarding documentation is very well organised, that arrangements for safeguarding are secure, and that all statutory requirements 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	110197
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	401106

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	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Townsend
Headteacher	Louise McRae
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 January 2010
Telephone number	01908 373753
Email address	knowlesnursery@milton-keynes.gov.uk

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