

Cherry Trees Nursery School

Hawkins Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 9LS

Inspection dates

4 to 5 July 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Cherry Trees Nursery provides an outstanding education in all aspects of learning for children at the school.
- Leaders have created a culture of high expectations, with an insistence on the very best provision.
- Highly committed and knowledgeable governors support and challenge the leaders effectively. They rigorously check how well children achieve and are judicious, ensuring that leaders spend additional funding effectively to support children.
- Leaders and staff are keen to share the school's values, ethos and expertise with others. All staff earnestly promote the importance of the youngest children in the local area having a good start to their education.
- From their different starting points, all groups of children, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged children, make strong progress.
- The learning environment is very carefully planned, both inside and out. It enables children to explore, investigate and be curious.
- High-quality teaching and learning is typical at Cherry Trees. Exemplary team work underpins staff's success in ensuring the best outcomes for children.
- Teaching is characterised by high-quality interactions between adults and children. Staff use their expertise and their teaching and learning time very well to move children's learning on.
- Children's interests and individual needs are very skilfully planned for and met. The curriculum is filled with imaginative and exciting activities that engage the children.
- Relationships are very strong and exude warmth and respect. Adults are exemplary role models to children. All staff carefully teach children routines and how to work harmoniously alongside each other. As a result, children's behaviour in school is excellent.
- Partnerships with parents are positive and well developed. Parents say they would recommend Cherry Trees and report that staff 'go over and above' for their children.
- While leaders keep a close eye on children's progress and use this information fully to improve teaching and meet children's needs, the precision of the strategic oversight does not mirror the rigour of the classroom-based assessment.
- While most-able children are challenged in their learning, on occasions they do not have the chance to achieve even better standards from their starting points.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the school's assessment system so the strategic oversight is analysed to ensure leaders have a more precise oversight of how well all children progress from their various starting points.
- Continue to increase the levels of challenge for children in all areas of learning, enabling even more children to exceed typical age-related expectations for their development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- All staff are very proud to work at Cherry Trees Nursery and, consequently, morale is high. There is a common shared vision which puts children's well-being and development at the heart of everything the school does. There is an exceptionally strong commitment from staff. Collectively, staff view the team as 'a family' and, voicing the view of many, one staff member said: 'We love getting up in the morning to come to work, it's great seeing the children progress.'
- The executive headteacher shows determination and high expectations in leading the school. Staff respect her dedication and commitment to ensuring that children get the very best start to their education. The executive headteacher values the contribution of staff and works alongside other leaders very successfully to help the whole team to work effectively together and learn from one another.
- Leadership is shared widely both throughout the school and across the federation. The executive headteacher is very well supported by highly skilled and knowledgeable senior and middle leaders. All leaders not only know the school well, but also know each individual child. Consequently, leadership at all levels is extremely effective.
- While leaders keep a close eye on children's progress and use this information fully to improve teaching and meet children's needs, the preciseness of the strategic oversight does not mirror the rigour of the classroom-based assessment. This sometimes results in a lack of 'big picture' knowledge to be able to identify patterns and trends of assessment in a meaningful way to support and inform further improvement.
- The provision for children with SEND is effective and exceptionally well-managed. The use of the additional funding is closely scrutinised and appropriately deployed to meet children's needs. All staff understand children's individual needs very well. This is underpinned by their in-depth knowledge of every child. This results in ensuring that the right support is in place for children with SEND so they make excellent progress from their lower starting points.
- The early years pupil premium is very well spent and evaluated, so leaders, including governors, know the difference it makes to children's outcomes. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged children receive highly effective support that develops their social, emotional and personal development and, consequently, increases their capacity to learn. Leaders carefully monitor the progress of each disadvantaged child, and they work with families to support pupils' well-being.
- The curriculum takes account of children's interests and offers wide-ranging and exciting learning experiences. It ignites children's love of learning, enabling their curiosity to develop and their thirst for knowledge to grow. Children's personal development sits at the core of Cherry Tree's curriculum. It supports and encourages the development of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding as well as an awareness of British values.
- The school has a strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. All children are welcomed into this highly nurturing and caring school community. Children learn

respect, tolerance and how to work collaboratively, preparing them very well for life in modern Britain. Leaders ensure that there is no discrimination against anyone.

- Parents are very positive about the school and hold Cherry Trees in the highest regard. They sing the praises of the staff, compliment the quality of the teaching and are full of gratitude for how well staff take care of their children. One parent's comments summarised those of many who responded to the Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View: 'Cherry Trees is a wonderful, engaging and educational environment, with well-being at the heart of the nursery.'
- The school works hard to share their exceptional practice with other early years providers. As a partner in the Peter Pan Teaching School Alliance, staff make a significant commitment towards this work. While this is very effective and contributes towards staff sharing good practice and accessing high-quality training, leaders are very careful to ensure that the very high standards at Cherry Trees are maintained.
- While the local authority visits the school to offer support and challenge, Cherry Trees is a self-sufficient nursery and has very good capacity to further develop and improve. The local authority benefits considerably from the school's work in sharing their expertise across the early years sector within Bedford Borough Council.

Governance of the school

- Governors are highly knowledgeable. They ask challenging and appropriately probing questions of leaders about how well the nursery is performing. They demonstrate a secure understanding of the progress that different groups of children make, including those who are disadvantaged, those children with SEND and children who speak English as an additional language. Governors have a very good awareness of the school's many strengths and are rightly proud of the quality of education the school provides.
- Over time, governors have supported leaders effectively to ensure that the many changes that have taken place due to funding scenarios have not been detrimental to the school's performance. As a result of the governors knowing the school well, they have been insightful and shrewd, but, equally, sensitive in their management of change. Consequently, the school's excellent performance has been maintained and staff morale has not wavered throughout.
- Governors have an excellent knowledge and oversight of the legal aspects of their role and ensure that these responsibilities are well met. For example, they understand their safeguarding role and check that all staff do too. Rigorous financial management is in place. As part of this, they are proactive in ensuring that funding is spent wisely and that all decisions made have an impact on improving children's early school experiences.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously and ensure that keeping children safe is a priority, underpinning all they do. Leaders ensure that all staff are well trained and have the most up-to-date knowledge of legal guidance and policies,

including radicalisation and extremism. Staff have a thorough understanding of the school's safeguarding policy and act swiftly when concerns arise. An extremely strong culture of vigilance and care for each individual child and their family is evident.

- The executive headteacher and governors have a secure oversight of recruitment procedures. These are kept well and detailed and have been checked so they meet legal requirements. This ensures that all checks have been completed to make sure all staff, governors and volunteers are suitable to work with children.
- Supervision of all children, including the two-year-olds, is appropriate and meets legal requirements. All adults are vigilant and aware of children's movements and whereabouts throughout the school day. This ensures that children are well looked after.
- Designated safeguarding leaders consistently act on and follow up any concerns. They are persistent in following up referrals to make sure that timely action is taken and families receive appropriate support. Leaders have effective links with a range of external agencies and are not afraid to challenge for more support to ensure children receive the help they need.
- The family support worker works closely with leaders to ensure the support reaches wider than the children attending the school. She is skilful in seeking and finding support for vulnerable children and their families. Families value the help and advice they receive and, consequently, trust staff to be able to support them well.
- Throughout their day-to-day activities, staff remind children of safety when participating in activities. For example, gentle reminders about moving from each area inside and outdoors or carrying and using scissors safely are given. Children are routinely prompted to explain to adults how they might approach a task so that staff can ensure that children are able to assess and manage risks for themselves. Consequently, children have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Parents believe their children are safe at school. They feel confident leaving their young children in the care of all adults and say: 'Staff look after the children as if they are their own.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching at Cherry Trees Nursery is strongly characterised by high-quality interactions between adults and children. Staff are highly skilled in knowing exactly when to intervene and when to step back and allow children to work things out for themselves. Adult interactions are purposeful and focused on deepening children's knowledge and understanding. Staff make the very best use of time and their expertise to quicken children's learning so that every child achieves extremely well from their starting points.
- All children, including the two-year-olds, display high levels of engagement and a deep, sustained focus on their learning. This is because staff plan highly engaging activities which are very well suited to children's interests and abilities. The learning environment, both indoors and outside, is exceptionally well planned and provides exciting opportunities across all areas of learning.

- Careful, accurate and effective assessment underpins all teaching. Staff know each individual child very well because they regularly check children's understanding and act immediately to help children take important next steps in their learning.
- The curriculum has been designed to enable children to learn effectively. Every learning opportunity is skilfully shaped to support children in becoming active and enthusiastic learners. Opportunities to play, explore and investigate are guided sensitively by knowledgeable adults who understand how young children learn.
- Independence is encouraged from the outset. All children, including the two-year-olds, follow instructions and adhere to well established routines. Children select resources and activities to work on from the moment they walk through the doors each day. The school is a constant hive of activity, and the buzz of learning permeates all areas, and at all times, including during the smaller key worker group sessions.
- Language is promoted extremely well throughout the nursery. Staff take every opportunity to talk to children. They provide a detailed running commentary throughout the day, using challenging vocabulary and extended sentences, which children imitate. They include children in demanding discussions, expecting children to think for themselves, reason and explain. As a result, children quickly develop the skills to express themselves clearly and confidently.
- Children learn a variety of stories, songs and rhymes in key worker group sessions. All children work directly with their key worker, allowing for this daily, precisely targeted work. This encourages all children to have opportunities to 'talk' and be able to confidently express themselves in front of others effectively. This is especially successful for children who speak English as an additional language.
- Children who speak English as an additional language are exceptionally well supported. Adults converse with children in their own language and, alongside this, they model the English equivalent for the children. This ensures that children who speak English as an additional language can access all learning and become confident in speaking English, while knowing it is a benefit to them to also access their own language too.
- Teaching of phonics, early reading, writing and mathematical skills is extremely well integrated into the activities available for children. For example, children self-register and are encouraged to sign their names when they are in. Key workers utilise children's number skills to check how many boys and girls there are in school, encouraging children to write the number on a board. Staff then use the opportunity to ask questions such as: 'How many children are there altogether?' or 'If there was one less/more, how many children would we have in our group today?' This results in children learning and applying vocabulary and their basic skills as they play and take part in daily routines.
- Children master new skills throughout all areas of learning rapidly because staff work alongside them, modelling clearly. For example, children quickly become confident in counting, recognising numbers and basic letter formation because staff show them first and give children time to practise and develop their understanding. Precision and accuracy are encouraged and expected. All staff have very high expectations of the children.
- Children's learning is valued highly in attractive, purposeful displays throughout the school. Children enthusiastically pointed out their writing, resulting from their reading

of 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. One child used their writing to enthusiastically retell the story and explain how the caterpillar started off very hungry but got bigger as it ate more food, recalling the salami, pickle, chocolate and cherry pie it ate.

- Children's learning is meticulously documented in learning journals. These focus equally on progress in personal development and well-being, as well as children's development in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematical development. Parents are involved fully, for example during 'folder Friday', when they visit the school to see what their children have been learning, and they contribute regularly. These records are then used to supplement the assessment information and other informal contributions to give an excellent and very full picture of children's achievements.
- Staff skilfully use questions to tease out what children know and can do already. They provide effective support and challenge to further extend children's thinking. While this is the case, there are a few occasions, for example in focused group work, when children show they are capable of more and adults do not make full use of chances to capitalise on these children's higher starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote children's personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Children's care and welfare are of the highest priority in the school. Relationships between adults and children are excellent and are one of the many strengths in the school. Key workers at Cherry Trees are pivotal to this. As a result, children thrive and flourish in the safe, secure and stimulating environment.
- Children confidently make choices, share with one another and develop respect for themselves and each other. For example, in group work, a key worker communicated with a child who speaks English as an additional language in the child's own language and other children sat, waited and listened patiently for the child to respond in their chosen way.
- Adults give sensitive, well-informed support so that children are willing to try unfamiliar activities and develop new interests. This results in children quickly developing the confidence to do things for themselves.
- Children put things away and access resources themselves and willingly join in the expected routines. For example, during a 'tidying up' time, the inspector tried to talk to a group of children about their reading. Although they patiently appeased the inspector, so as not to appear impolite, eventually one child said: 'Do you know the clapping means we are supposed to be tidying up but we can't when you talk to us.'
- Children are developing good learning attitudes and want to continue their learning at home. For example, one child said to their key worker: 'I have to go now, but I am going to do a picture of that at home and show you tomorrow.'
- When children make their own choices about what they want to do, children play happily together because they are taught explicitly to take turns and help one another. As they play games, they develop a deep understanding of the difference between

what is right and wrong. Children confidently chat and listen carefully to each other and show respect to all those around them.

- Children demonstrate pride in their work and in their environment. They are keen to share their learning, proudly sharing their pictures of snails to inspectors and showing them how they form their letters to write their names. The high expectations modelled by all adults are closely followed by all children.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children is outstanding.
- Staff set very high expectations of children's behaviour, resulting in their conduct being exemplary. Staff remind children of what is expected of them and use praise extremely well to reinforce excellent behaviour. All staff consistently manage behaviour in the same way, and children respond to all adults well.
- Lunchtimes are enjoyable social occasions for children. They reflect and typify the high behaviour expectations set by all adults. Children delight in talking to each other and eating lunch in a civilised environment, complete with tablecloths and music.
- Staff deal promptly and sensitively with any instances of inappropriate behaviour, teaching children how to empathise and resolve conflicts kindly with others. However, because the children are engrossed and highly engaged in their learning, these instances are rare.
- Children want to go to school every day. Parents reported, and inspectors saw, that when parents arrived to pick them up, some children were visibly torn between excitement at seeing their parents and not wanting to have to leave their learning to go home. This was extended further by some children wanting the best of both worlds, encouraging their parents to join in with the reading of 'Handa's Surprise' and share the food tasting.
- The school does everything possible to encourage parents to bring their children to school. The importance of regular attendance is given a high profile. Any unexplained absences are followed up diligently, even though children attending the nursery are not of statutory school age. Consequently, although attendance does fluctuate, generally children's rates of attendance show that they are forming good habits, ready for their next school.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- A high proportion of children join the nursery with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. Children make very good, sustained progress so that, by the time they leave the nursery to start Reception, most at least reach the expectations for their age from their varying starting points. This results in children being well-prepared for the next stage in their education.
- A very detailed account is maintained of the progress that different groups of children and individuals are making. This close monitoring is a factor in successfully making sure that the provision for all children is tailored to each child and precisely meets the needs of children so they, therefore, all achieve well in all areas of learning.

- Personal, social and emotional development are a strength in the Nursery. This is because of the emphasis on well-being and staff's belief that if a child is happy, safe, feels secure and confident, then they can 'achieve anything'. Every adult has high aspirations for all children. As a result, all children make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Children with SEND make very strong gains in their learning. This is because they are exceptionally well supported by highly trained, skilled adults, and, consequently, their individual needs are routinely well catered for.
- Disadvantaged children make excellent progress given their starting points. This is because leaders ensure that their needs are met through well-planned teaching and learning that meets their needs accurately. Furthermore, the school provides other opportunities, such as the 'breakfast' and 'tea' club, which contribute towards helping disadvantaged children to be ready to learn at the beginning of the day and reinforce what they have learned at the end of the day.
- Children who speak English as an additional language achieve exceptionally well. When these children start Cherry Trees, adults quickly assess their language so that teaching can be adapted and individualised support put in place to help them progress to reach the language expectations for their age. Staff successfully develop children who speak English as an additional language to acquire essential English language skills quickly. This in turn ensures that these children make very good progress in all other areas of learning.
- Children quickly develop early reading, writing and mathematical skills from their starting points. This is because children are given a wealth of opportunities to count, read and rehearse their writing. Consequently, a high proportion of children can count to 10, and many count above this, accurately and use this knowledge in various contexts. Children confidently explain what a book is about, using clues and learned strategies to identify letters and sounds in words, and correctly form many letters of the alphabet.
- Most-able children do well in the nursery because of both the challenge that is built into the planned activities and how staff encourage and motivate children to explore and do well. However, there are a few occasions when most-able children could achieve better as they demonstrate that they are capable of exceeding age-related expectations if they have more opportunities to do so.
- The school's successful work communicating with parents about how to help their children learn supports parents to contribute towards their children achieving well. For example, children talked to inspectors about how they read with their parents at home and could recall the nursery rhymes they read. One child playing with money in the nursery 'shop' told an inspector: 'When I shop with my mum, I can have sweets if I can work out how much money to give the lady in the shop.'

School details

Unique reference number	109413
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10088734

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	2 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Walker
Executive headteacher	Isabel Davis
Telephone number	01234 354 788
Website	www.bedfordnurseryschools.com
Email address	cherrytrees@bedfordnurseryschools.com
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2018

Information about this school

- Cherry Trees Nursery is an average-sized school and is one of two providers in the Bedford Nursery Schools Federation.
- Bedford Nursery Schools Federation is a hard federation. The two nursery schools share one executive headteacher and one governing body. Both schools work together on the main legal policies and documentation.
- Cherry Trees Nursery School is a partner of the Peter Pan Teaching School Alliance. As part of this partnership the Nursery provides support and training to early years settings and schools throughout Bedford Borough.
- The school provides provision for two-year-olds and rising three- to five-year-olds. Most children attend part-time. A small number of children attend for extended hours, including attendance at the school-led breakfast club and 'tea club' provision.
- The proportion of children with SEND is higher than the national average.

- The proportion of children known to be eligible for early years pupil premium funding is lower than national average.
- The school has a larger than average proportion of children who speak English as an additional language.
- The executive headteacher is a national leader of education. In addition, three staff members are specialist leaders of education.

Information about this inspection

- Both inspectors visited the provision for both two-year-olds and the three- to five-year-olds throughout the inspection. During this time, inspectors were accompanied by a senior leader on each occasion and inspectors spoke to children about their choices of activity and their learning.
- During the inspection, both inspectors met all members of the senior leadership team, which includes the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, the special needs coordinator and the school business manager.
- There was a meeting between the lead inspector and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with the local authority school improvement partner and inspectors spoke on the telephone to both a representative of the teaching school and of the 'schools of tomorrow' project to gain an insight into the wider work undertaken by leaders.
- The lead inspector shared reading books with children and talked to children about their reading habits both at home and at school. One inspector also had lunch with the children to observe children's behaviour when they were not in their classrooms.
- There were no pupils' views provided on Ofsted's online pupils' survey, but inspectors spoke to children throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 20 responses from parents and carers to Parent View, and 12 free-text responses from parents were also analysed. Additionally, inspectors held a more formal parent meeting with parents to find out more about their views of the school's work. Leaders also offered parents a paper version of the Ofsted parents' questionnaire, and the 56 responses were scrutinised by inspectors.
- Inspectors considered 21 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. Inspectors also spoke to staff during the inspection and met with a group of key workers to discuss their work at the school.
- The inspectors took into account a wide range of information, including the school's website, the federation development plan, leaders' school evaluation, information from the governing body minutes and leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning.
- A thorough review of documentation relating to safeguarding was carried out, including checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Jacqueline Bell-Cook

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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