

Colleges Nursery School

Address: Campkin Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB4 2LD

Unique reference number (URN): 110597

Inspection report: 14 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ● ●
Expected standard	● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Children achieve highly at this school. They engage confidently in a wide range of activities that build early skills in communication, language, mathematics, physical development and social and emotional regulation. In a wide range of subjects, children apply their learning independently. For example, identifying and counting bugs, ordering number sequences, caring for dolls with empathy and talking about topics like dinosaurs and volcanoes. This indicates that knowledge is being retained and transferred.

Disadvantaged children and those with additional needs make meaningful gains due to well-targeted support. For example one-to-one coordination work and adapted tools enable all children to participate successfully. Routines like turn-taking, tidying up and snack preparation further strengthen self-regulation and independence. Staff identify and address gaps in learning effectively. This helps children make excellent progress from their different starting points. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion is at the heart of the school's work. Staff ensure that children feel safe, settled and ready to learn. Children with a wide range of needs are fully included in daily routines and learning. Adults model language, support social development and help children engage confidently in their learning. Staff identify children's strengths and next steps, including in communication, listening and social development, and use this information effectively to provide the support children need.

Staff know children well and provide responsive support. Learning is adapted so that all children can access the curriculum. For example, activities that develop coordination and the use of adapted resources help children participate successfully.

Leaders have a secure understanding of how well provision meets children's needs. They review children's progress regularly and adjust support when needed. As a result, children become more engaged in learning, sustain their attention for longer and work alongside others more consistently. Effective systems for identifying needs ensure that children and families receive support promptly.

Leaders work closely with external agencies, including health professionals, social care and family support services. This coordinated approach strengthens the support available to children and helps improve their engagement with learning over time.

Leaders use the pupil premium grant effectively to ensure disadvantaged children can access learning and wider opportunities. This has a positive impact on their confidence and engagement.

Leaders place a high priority on children's personal development and wellbeing. They have designed a broad, coherent and ambitious programme that reflects the school's context and children's needs. Children are proud of their school and play an active role in creating a welcoming and happy environment. They develop an excellent understanding of equality and speak confidently about everyone being welcome in their school. This helps children develop confidence and resilience when trying new things.

Staff model kindness and positive self-care routines so that children learn these behaviours for themselves. They plan deliberate opportunities for children to develop self-regulation. For example, staff provide only three of each toy or tool so that children learn to negotiate, share and take turns successfully. They use sand timers to help children understand the importance of waiting and sharing. Staff recognise that these skills are important in preparing children for the next stage of their education.

Disadvantaged children are at the heart of the school's work. Leaders ensure that they benefit fully from a wide range of opportunities, including visits to local shops, clubs and workshops. Staff make effective use of the local area to enrich learning. For example, children learn about bees through activities and a visit from a beekeeper. They also visit the bus station to learn how buses operate, are cleaned and are maintained.

Children are very well prepared for starting nursery and moving on to the next stage of their education. Staff place equal importance on children's emotional and academic readiness. They gather detailed information from families and agencies, which helps them tailor support and transition activities effectively. For example, displays showing the schools that children will attend encourage discussion, helping children talk confidently about upcoming changes and strengthening their sense of belonging. As a result, children are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Staff build strong relationships with families and external agencies to ensure that key information is shared and children settle quickly into the setting. Inclusive practice is central to the school's work. Leaders know children and their families well and identify those who may need additional pastoral support at an early stage.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Most children attend school regularly, and attendance is improving. Leaders track attendance closely and quickly identify children who need extra support. Through regular communication, flexible arrangements and effective follow-up procedures, leaders are supporting more children and families, particularly disadvantaged children, to attend regularly.

Children behave well and show positive attitudes to learning. Daily routines are firmly established and help children feel safe, secure and ready to learn. For example, children

separate from their parent or carer on arrival at nursery with ease to seek out their key worker. There is a clear intentionality in making sure that routines are predictable so that children feel safe in knowing what is coming next. For example, children prepare fruit, pour drinks and learn to manage small mistakes by tidying up and trying again. As a result, children take pride in what they can do for themselves.

Staff know children well and respond calmly when behaviour is not as expected. They help children to understand the impact of their actions and develop positive relationships with others. There is a strong culture of care throughout the setting, and children's needs are carefully considered. Bullying and discriminatory behaviour are rare and are dealt with effectively when they occur. As a result, children feel happy, safe and valued.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum that focuses on children's personal, social and emotional development and the characteristics of effective learning. As a result, children learn how to learn. Staff adapt the curriculum to meet children's interests and needs. This helps children get the right support quickly and achieve well.

Staff have secure subject knowledge, especially in mathematics. Teachers know what children can do and use this information to plan learning. Well-chosen projects give children a wide range of learning experiences. These often focus on resources such as glue, woodwork and mark making. This approach helps staff build learning over time and meet children's individual needs. Children develop foundational skills such as pencil grip and can use the skill across a range of activities so that it becomes embedded. Staff understand children's stages of development well. As a result, children benefit from a rich and inclusive curriculum.

Leaders have made improving staff interactions a priority. They regularly check the impact of this work. High-quality training has helped staff develop children's vocabulary and language through purposeful conversations. However, the quality of interactions is not always consistent across all areas of learning. At times, staff miss opportunities to develop children's language further, extend their thinking and move learning on more quickly.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders set a clear vision that ensures every child, whatever their background, needs or starting point, feels safe, valued and confident. They have developed a highly inclusive culture. Leaders make decisions in the best interests of children, particularly those who are vulnerable. They identify priorities based on the changing needs of their children and the challenges within the local area.

Governors know the school well and take pride in supporting its work. They fulfil their statutory duties and use their expertise to provide both support and challenge. However, this is not yet consistent across all aspects of the school's work. Governors are working with leaders to develop a stronger understanding of attendance and school improvement priorities, including the pupil premium strategy.

Leaders ensure that parents and carers are valued partners in their children's education. This includes parents of children who may need additional support or adjustments, for example due to special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or barriers such as being new to speaking English. As a result, parents are highly positive about the school's work.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They describe feeling valued and listened to. Staff appreciate the support they receive for their professional development, workload and wellbeing. They say that leaders provide time and opportunities to support them and describe a collaborative working environment.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Children thrive in a highly nurturing and stimulating environment. They are excited to come to school and eager to learn. Well-established routines help children feel safe, secure and valued. Children develop independence skills that help them navigate their environment. For example, they seek out their key workers to find out what exciting activities are planned for the day. Children are naturally curious and eager to explore the world around them. Secure relationships with staff create a deep sense of belonging. Children confidently seek support and trust adults to help them overcome challenges.

Children achieve extremely well from their starting points because staff have an excellent understanding of their interests, needs and next steps in learning. Staff ensure that carefully planned activities capture children's curiosity. However, this practice is not always consistent. Staff build on children's knowledge and skills, enabling them to succeed in a range of learning tasks. High-quality interactions and carefully chosen vocabulary support children's language development. Children benefit from a rich reading culture that fosters a love of books. For example, staff share books linked to recent experiences, such as learning about the butterfly life cycle.

Staff are highly attuned to children's social and emotional needs. They proactively support children to manage their feelings and resolve conflicts. This helps children develop independence and positive relationships. Children confidently use strategies such as sand timers to share resources fairly, for example when taking turns on the outdoor swing.

The curriculum provides enriching experiences that broaden children's understanding of the world. Opportunities such as celebrating the World Cup, learning about environmental issues and meeting a beekeeper help children develop confidence, curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. This enables them to flourish socially, emotionally and academically.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to develop the school's work on embedding vocabulary and high-quality interactions across all areas of learning and monitor the impact of this work.

- Governors should continue to support and challenge leaders to ensure that governors have an accurate understanding of the school's provision and its impact.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Carolyn Purser.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, staff and pupils during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the governing body including the chair of governors and of the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

At the time of the inspection, there were 84 children on roll.

Headteacher: Ruth Holman

Lead inspector:

Nerrissa Bear, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Wayne Jarvis, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 14 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

84

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

0.0%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

20.24%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Our grades explained

Exceptional ●

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard ●

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard ●

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright