

# The Ace Centre Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122974
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	380560
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	52
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Georgia Mazower
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Ruff
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 July 2009
<b>School address</b>	The Ace Centre Burford Road Chipping Norton Oxfordshire OX7 5DZ
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<b>Age group</b>	3–5
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	29–30 September 2011
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eleven sessions of learning were observed involving six early years practitioners. Discussions were held with parents and carers, headteacher, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including short-term planning, the school improvement plan, records of children's progress, and questionnaires from 28 parents and carers and 10 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress of all groups of children.
- How well children are prepared for their next stage of education in their acquisition of basic skills.
- The quality of the school's self-evaluation and school development planning.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized nursery. Children are admitted to the nursery in the term after their third birthday and can stay until they transfer to primary school. The nursery is fully integrated with the Ace Children's Centre which provides a day nursery, after-school care, a holiday play scheme, a family centre, play sessions for two-year-olds and a dad's club. The headteacher of the nursery school is also the headteacher of the centre. A day-care inspection was also undertaken during the time of the inspection and will be reported on separately. Children can access extended provision, including a breakfast and an after-school club, depending on parental needs. Almost all children are of White British heritage, with one tenth of children from different minority ethnic groups, including Chinese, German and Columbian. A very small number of children (well below average) have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly related to speech and language difficulties, autism and behavioural or emotional needs. The nursery has received the Healthy Schools award.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

The nursery continues to provide an outstanding quality of education for its children. Highly professional staff, led expertly by a visionary headteacher, stop at nothing in order to improve on previous best performance. There is no complacency in this nursery, as maintaining an outstanding judgement in three previous inspections has forced staff to seek even greater levels of challenge. The nursery is a hub of professional research and inquiry on how young children learn best and it rightly deserves the glowing reputation it has in the community. Parents and carers are delighted with what is on offer. 'Every day is magical, our children love learning and the staff cannot do enough to support us,' said one parent, speaking for many. This confidence in staff is justified as every child is known as an individual and a tailor-made programme of work is designed to ensure excellent progress. As a result, children's learning is outstanding in all areas of learning.

Children leave the nursery exceeding the expectations for their age. They make excellent progress in early reading, writing and number, and behave impeccably. The school is particularly successful in supporting children with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language, including them in all learning activities. Excellent partnerships with a range of agencies and early intervention with parents and carers make a significant contribution to children's excellent attitudes and well-being.

Children have excellent knowledge of healthy eating, they know how the organs in the body function and that fruit and vegetables are good for you. Their knowledge of the local community and beyond, including the lives of children in different countries, is outstanding. For example, they know how Egyptians celebrate spring and that eggs are symbols of new life. Children play safely both indoors and outdoors and it is the norm in this nursery to see children looking out for one another's safety outdoors. 'Be careful, don't stand too close to the slide,' are comments heard daily in the excellent outdoor provision.

Teaching is outstanding and has a significant impact on children's excellent learning. Teachers have excellent relationships with children and have them 'eating out of their hands' because of the skilled way that they intervene in developing children's language. Planning is thorough, but sometimes activities are not always underpinned by the skills different ability groups need to acquire. This occasionally slows down learning for more capable children. The progress of different groups is tracked carefully and learning diaries are used to record significant achievement. These

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provide a valuable record of children's achievement for parents and carers.

The learning opportunities offered are exceptionally well thought out and build upon children's interest levels. The outdoor area is a haven of activity with children climbing, building, gardening and cooperating with one another. Children demonstrate outstanding social skills in the way they learn and share equipment with one another. Skills of independence, perseverance and resilience in learning are consistently encouraged by staff. Parents and carers are delighted with their children's learning, with one commenting, 'You send your children in knowing full well that they have not mastered climbing skills, you return to pick them up and, not only have they climbed to the top of the climbing frame, they have safely jumped off as well!' Children are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps of education, they can count, recognise numbers, link letters to sounds and many of them already can sound out their names.

The headteacher is relentless in her drive for giving children and their families the best support. Together with a well-informed governing body who offer a high degree of support and challenge, she is making plans for the sustainability of this excellent provision in spite of cuts in funding. The budget is carefully monitored. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school development plan has all the correct areas identified for improvement but, at the moment, some success criteria are too vague to be monitored effectively by the governing body.

The nursery has excellent capacity to improve, as demonstrated by improved provision for those children entering the Reception Year, improved systems of assessment and the excellent development of the outside area as a learning classroom.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that planned activities make reference to the skills groups of different ability need to acquire.
- Ensure the school development plan is underpinned by clearly defined success criteria which can be monitored more easily by the governing body.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**

**1**

Children love coming to nursery and are active explorers of knowledge. Attendance is high and children do not stay away from the nursery unless they are seriously ill. From below average attainment, children exceed the expectations for their age in all areas of learning because of excellent teaching, a highly stimulating curriculum and excellent care, guidance and support. Children are very curious, for example, when observing mini beasts, they are fascinated by the many legs insects have and want to know whether these help insects run faster. Excellent behaviour and safe practices support their outstanding relationships because they are taught to care for one another from a very early age. They have excellent knowledge of healthy eating,

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they know that drinking milk makes you strong and that too many sweets and crisps are bad for you. Children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Children marvel at nature by observing veins on leaves, they are fascinated by space and creatively explore the world of fairies, princesses and pirates in the ‘small world’ area. Excellent learning is characterised by children’s inquisitiveness, having hands-on experiences using a variety of media and acquiring language at a very fast rate. This prepares them very well for the next stages of their education.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make exceptional progress as staff are mindful of the targets that need to be included in learning on a daily basis. Children from different minority ethnic backgrounds pick up language very quickly because their customs and beliefs are part of their daily experiences. Learning in the Forest School contributes to children’s excellent knowledge of their local surroundings, through making maps, marvelling at plants and animals, and problem-solving activities.

*These are the grades for children’s outcomes*

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Children’s achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Children’s attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of children’s learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which children feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Children’s behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Children’s attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Children are cared for, guided and supported exceptionally well. Teaching is outstanding. Staff have a wonderful way of re-engaging children back into learning should their attention inadvertently slip. One young child found it difficult to settle while listening to a story. The teacher immediately gave him a soft toy and this helped him to calm down and refocus. All staff have eyes in the back of their heads,

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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they know exactly when to model, support and step aside so that optimum learning conditions can be established. The outstanding learning opportunities are all centred around children’s interest levels. Excellent partnership with parents and carers, based on highly effective communication of what their children’s daily accomplishments have been, enable parents and carers to know what activities have been covered. Detailed observations of children’s learning are regularly shared with parents and carers, which enable them to be true partners in learning. The nursery has excellent partnerships with a range of services, schools and consortia which contribute to the sharing of best practice in the transition from the nursery to the Reception Year, as well as signposting parents and carers for expert help and advice. Outstanding provision for children’s care, guidance and support underpins all of the nursery’s work.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets children’s needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has won the hearts and minds of staff due to the fact that she is an excellent Early Years Foundation Stage practitioner herself. Morale is high and team-work is excellent. A rigorous programme of continuous professional development has resulted in a highly trained workforce undertaking research, which is worthy of sharing with other settings. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored, with pointers given for improvement which staff instantly take on board. Partnerships with a range of agencies, including the centre, are exceptionally strong, ensuring a very quick response to families’ needs. The governing body executes its statutory duties exceptionally well. Governors provide rigorous challenge and are very supportive of the nursery. They are reviewing their structure of committees to become even more strategic.

Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding are exemplary, especially the quality of case studies and the knowledge staff have of systems and procedures relating to disclosure. The nursery celebrates and welcomes cultural diversity. The community cohesion audit is very thorough with a strong focus on developing all aspects of local, national and global communities. All parents and carers and children have equality of opportunity to benefit from what is on offer, and the progress of different groups is checked regularly. The school development plan is compiled by all stakeholders but, as yet, its success criteria are not sharp enough to enable the governors to evaluate fully the impact of provision on outcomes. The nursery

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provides excellent value for money as it has sustained its high-quality provision over time.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Views of parents and carers

A higher than average proportion of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. Parents and carers are exceptionally supportive of the nursery's work and are delighted with their children's progress, welfare and excellent quality of care provided.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at The Ace Centre Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 52 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	96	1	4	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	96	1	4	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	23	82	5	18	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	93	1	4	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	93	1	4	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	22	79	4	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	86	3	11	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	71	5	18	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	26	93	1	4	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	79	2	7	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	93	2	7	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	89	2	7	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	27	96	1	4	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its children’s needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



3 October 2011

Dear Children

### **Inspection of The Ace Centre Nursery School, Chipping Norton OX7 5DZ**

Thank you so much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We had a lovely time watching you learn. You thoroughly enjoy your activities in the outside area and you learn new things all the time. We do hope that the dolphins in your water play area have not eaten too many lentils and modelling clay! You attend an excellent nursery and your parents and carers are absolutely right in telling us that it is outstanding.

Here are just a few of the excellent aspects we found.

- You are exceptionally well looked after by all of the staff.
- You have excellent attitudes to learning and you make exceptional progress in all areas of learning.
- You behave impeccably.
- You know a lot of facts about being healthy, know how to stay safe and are very careful when you play outdoors.
- You have excellent knowledge of your surroundings and you also know so many things about life in different countries. I am sorry not to have tasted the Pretzels!
- You are well prepared for the big school and you love learning.
- You have excellent relationships with staff and with one another.
- Your teachers are excellent at their jobs and your headteacher leads your nursery exceptionally well.

We have asked your headteacher to do two things to help your nursery get even better.

- Help your teachers to plan activities that offer you increasing challenge in things to do when they have watched you learning and looked at your work.
- Improve a very important document called the school development plan by identifying the kinds of things they can measure to see if the nursery is getting better.

All of you can help them by asking your teachers what you need to learn next and telling the governors how your learning is getting better as a result of decisions that they make.

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley  
Lead inspector

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