



The Ace Centre Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122974
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 281375
Inspection dates 13 June 2006 to 14 June 2006
Reporting inspector Vanessa Ward AI

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

Type of school	Nursery	School address	Burford Road
School category	Community		Chipping Norton
Age range of pupils	3 to 5		OX7 5DZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01608 644440
Number on roll	71	Fax number	01608 644440
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Maryann Avery
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Sue Clempson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Seventy-one children attend the Ace Centre Nursery part-time. They are admitted to the nursery in the term after their third birthday. They leave either at the end of the school year before they are five or, in the case of those who are transferring to the local primary school, at the end of the term before they are five. These children continue to attend the nursery school in the afternoons during their first term at primary school. The nursery school is part of the Ace Children's Centre, which also provides a day nursery, after-school care, a holiday play scheme, a family centre, and a range of support groups and outreach work. Almost all the children are of White British heritage. A few children are from Traveller families. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and statements of special educational need is below average. The school is currently led and managed by the nursery school coordinator, during the temporary absence of the headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Ace Centre Nursery is an outstanding school. The attention paid to children's individual needs is impressive and promotes outstanding achievement in both their academic and personal development. The school judges its effectiveness to be outstanding and this is fully supported by the inspection evidence. However, there is no complacency among the staff and governors. A commitment to review, evaluate and develop provision means that there is a constant drive for further improvement. The school is extremely well led. All leaders and managers work closely as a team to provide the best they can for the children. Governors fulfil their roles very effectively and contribute significantly to school improvement. The school works very well with other agencies and with parents to enhance the children's well-being and achievement.

Although recently many children have joined the nursery with skills below those expected of three-year-olds, the outstanding teaching, curriculum and levels of care enable them to make rapid progress. As a result, by the time they leave, many are achieving above expected levels. Much of this success is due to the thorough tracking of each child's progress and subsequent adjustments to provision. However, the staff do not involve the children sufficiently in evaluating for themselves how well they are doing.

The enjoyment of learning is given very high priority and is achieved with great success. The richness and variety of the curriculum, combined with high quality teaching, mean that learning provides constant pleasure, excitement and adventure, combined with high achievement. One parent commented 'The staff are constantly coming up with new ideas for play. I am always astounded by their ingenuity'.

The children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The children behave very well and most attend regularly. They gain high self-esteem through carefully planned encouragement to become independent, make choices and take on responsibilities. They learn quickly to share, take turns and work together because these opportunities are integrated into their learning experiences. They make outstanding progress in acquiring basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The nursery recognises that success in all of these areas is essential to them as they grow up. Through energetic activity in the nursery garden and daily opportunities to eat healthily and learn about healthy foods, the children gain excellent knowledge about healthy lifestyles. Their understanding of how to keep safe is constantly increased through the conscientious teaching of the staff.

Since the previous inspection, the school has made significant improvement and is very well placed to continue this trend. It provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for children to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards are outstanding because of the excellent teaching, curriculum and care that the school provides for each child. A significant number of children enter the school with skills that are generally less well developed than those of most three-year-olds. The degree of attention that is devoted to providing work to meet the needs of individual children means that all are very well challenged and make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. This includes those children with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as more able children. By the time they leave the school, most children reach the levels expected for their age and a large proportion exceed them in all areas of learning. Progress is tracked and monitored rigorously and any identified weaknesses are quickly remedied. A recent dip in the performance of boys led to changes in the curriculum and a subsequent rise in standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The children make outstanding progress in their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They thoroughly enjoy their time in school and show very great enthusiasm for learning. They behave very well and are taught to understand how their actions impact on others. Through the rich curriculum, they learn about different cultures and traditions. Attendance is satisfactory, with most children attending regularly. Children take on responsibilities willingly, helping at snack time and tidying away resources. The children develop high levels of self-esteem and confidence because of the focus given by all staff. They express their ideas about such issues as how the outdoor area should be developed, knowing that they will be listened to. They enjoy eating healthy foods in school. The children exercise energetically, taking full advantage of the provision in the garden area, which they use every day. Their achievements in basic skills and in teamwork prepare them well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding, enabling children to achieve very well. All of the staff have a very secure understanding of how young children learn. They stimulate and sustain children's interest, know how to prompt them to think and encourage them to respond by using skilful questioning. Such a question to a child who was struggling to cement bricks together with clay, prompted him both to solve the problem for himself and to articulate his ideas. The contribution made to children's learning by the support staff is of high quality.

Assessment procedures are very comprehensive and ensure that staff are fully aware of each child's progress. This information is used very effectively to influence the next steps in learning for each child. Planning for children's learning is very detailed, ensuring that all areas of learning are fully covered and providing a good balance between teacher-led and child initiated activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and provides much to interest and motivate the children. A very wide range of activities is available to the children, both indoors and outside, on a daily basis. Activities are tailored well both to meet children's stages of development and their interests, and this contributes significantly to their outstanding achievement. Curricular provision is regularly evaluated and adjusted to meet children's individual needs. Personal development, language, mathematical development and ICT are given particular focus and are promoted very well. Teaching about health and safety, combined with the promotion of good relationships, enhance the children's personal development. Visitors to school and visits out of school, especially the weekly outdoor learning at Forest School, provide many valuable experiences for the children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided for the children are all outstanding and are at the heart of the work of the school. Particular strengths are in the high quality of care it provides, taking into account each individual child's academic and personal needs. Links with other services, both within the Ace Centre and beyond, mean that specialist help is provided where needed. Systems for child protection, risk assessments and the promotion of health and safety are very effective.

Parents wholeheartedly support the school and its high levels of care. One parent reflected the views of many by commenting 'The children are genuinely loved and the atmosphere is always friendly and caring'. Parents are fully informed about their children's progress. Some opportunities are provided for children to talk about their work, but they are not routinely encouraged to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding because of the excellent guidance provided by the headteacher. Although, at the time of the inspection, she had been absent for several weeks, the high standards in the nursery provision were being maintained. The strong teamwork among the staff and governors, excellently led by the nursery school coordinator, has meant that the momentum for change has continued apace.

The school's processes for self-evaluation are strong, and take account of the views of staff, governors and parents. Its self-evaluation is well founded and accurate. This leads to effective action to remedy identified weaknesses and raise standards through the school development plan (SDP). A recent example is the extension of the whole curriculum into the outside garden area, which has greatly enriched provision.

The professional development of all staff is given high priority. There is a robust system of performance management that is successfully linked to improving children's academic success. Regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching are effective in raising achievement. The teachers play significant roles in leading initiatives identified in the SDP.

Governors are very involved in all aspects of school life. They are extremely well informed about school development and contribute significantly to school improvement. Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully tackled the issues that were identified, and has raised achievement and improved provision. It is very well placed to continue improving.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Children

I enjoyed my visit to your school very much. It was wonderful to see what a happy time you have there. You really enjoy your school because there are so many exciting things to do and learn. Your mums, dads and carers think that your school is a good place to be and I agree with them.

The grown-ups are very good at teaching you and they know exactly what each of you needs to learn. This helps you to learn lots of things. They are also very good at checking how well you are learning and they are going to help you to do this for yourselves.

You eat fruits and vegetables in school and get lots of exercise when you play in the garden, and this helps you to be healthy. You are good at sharing and taking turns and you behave very well. I hope that you carry on enjoying your school and doing such good work.

Best wishes

Vanessa Ward

Lead Inspector