

# 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>	327823
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	June Woolhouse

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	72
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs G Mazower
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs H Ruff
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Burford Road Chipping Norton OX7 5DZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01608 644440
<b>Fax number</b>	01608 644440

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Children attend the Ace Centre Nursery part time until they reach the Reception Year. They are admitted to the Nursery class in the term after their third birthday. They can stay, full time, for up to two terms until they transfer to the primary school. The nursery school is fully integrated with The Ace Children's Centre, which provides a day nursery, after-school care, a holiday play scheme, a family centre, and a range of support groups and outreach work. These include health visitors, a paediatrician, a speech and language therapist, a dietician, a midwife, a physiotherapist, legal advice and an early childhood development specialist. The headteacher of the nursery school is also the head of the children's centre. 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 needs, including speech and language difficulties, is below average. The school has received the Healthy School Award.

## 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 provides a magnificent start to these young children's early educational experiences. Its success stems from the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the Nursery coordinator. Children thrive because the headteacher has a deep and informed understanding of how young children develop and of the kind of experiences and care that foster their well-being and happiness. Constant reflection and relevant discussion among the whole team, focused on each child's developing needs, lead to exceptionally creative and well-planned activities that seamlessly incorporate all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Consequently, they make outstanding progress. Children have access to a wonderland of interesting and stimulating activities both indoors and outside, in the delightful garden, which is very skilfully used to set up rich opportunities for learning. In addition, the school runs a 'forest school', where children experience the freedom and enjoyment of playing and learning in a completely natural setting in nearby woods. This experience enhances the use of all their senses and imagination. As one child remarked as the rain started to fall, 'The rain makes stars on the paper. It could be night time.' Parents and carers rave about this nursery: 'The Ace Centre is exceptional and exceeds all my expectations as a parent'; 'My child is making excellent progress because he gets so much love and time from his teachers'; 'The smile on his face tells me he is loving his Nursery experience.' A considerable proportion of parents and carers responded in a similar way.

Children start Nursery with skills that are often below what is expected for their age, especially in their ability to communicate, and feel confident when they play with other children. The outstanding quality of what is planned for them and the unobtrusive support from all adults lead to their becoming healthy, energetic and enthusiastic children. Their confidence to try new experiences and their perseverance, for example, when they used dough to make fruit or tended the vegetables in the allotment, reflect their feelings of security and trust in the adults. Very effective assessment practice, which results in detailed written and pictorial records, informs future planning and allows adults to take close account of each child's interests.

The school's evaluations of its practice are very accurate. The excellent adult examples of how to treat each other respectfully and work together cooperatively show constantly in the children's excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning in general. Very well-planned, small world, activities - for example, being at the hairdresser's or on a building site - and the time spent in forest school equip them very well with an understanding of what life is like beyond the nursery. A very high premium is put on all aspects of children's welfare and safety because everyone knows that emotional and physical security are paramount in young learners. The headteacher is very skilled at promoting an inclusive ethos in the school, which includes caring for vulnerable children, those from different ethnic backgrounds and the older children who are ready to develop particular literacy and numeracy skills. As numbers of full-time children increase, the headteacher is considering in more detail how to plan for a slightly different emphasis in these children's experiences. In addition, this inclusion reaches out to all parents and carers and the range of adults who make going to nursery school such a joyful experience. It is a real team effort. Governors are an important and very effective part of the team and the broad range of skills they bring to their roles, for example in finance, business, early years education, the arts and music, make a considerable contribution to the school's many successes. The school and children's centre are at the very heart of the community and everyone benefits from the coherence of provision all the year round for children and their parents and carers. Leadership

and management are outstanding and there have been further improvements since the last, very successful, inspection. The school provides excellent value for money and has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend provision for the children moving into full-time education in the Reception Year.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Children's achievement is outstanding. They make very good progress across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum because of the excellent provision and exceptional skills of all the adults who foster their learning. Children reach standards that are well above those expected for their age by the time they leave the nursery. This has been the trend since the last inspection. Children with speech and language difficulties, and other learning needs and/or disabilities, are identified even before they start in the nursery, because of the integrated approach across the children's centre and the particular expertise of the early childhood development consultant. This means that all children make very good progress as they proceed through the centre and nursery. Rates of progress for boys and girls are broadly similar because the headteacher plans some activities for each gender to ensure that they both develop equally well regardless of different needs and interests.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Children's outstanding personal development stems from the excellent curriculum and the individual care and support that each child receives. They become enthusiastic, independent and enquiring learners very quickly. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development takes off because they have very good adult role models who show them how to behave, stay safe and take care of their surroundings. The school incorporates the cultural diversity of its community very well and children experience at first hand customs different from their own. They also have time to stop and stare, especially in the garden and forest school, which contributes considerably to their spiritual development. The emphasis on being healthy by choosing to go outside, growing fruit and vegetables and independently drinking milk and water has led to the Healthy School Award. One parent commented enthusiastically: 'Our daughter told us they made fruit salad with strawberries picked from the garden.' Attendance is satisfactory, given the age of the children.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development**

#### **Grade: 1**

Opportunities to learn are outstanding because they are planned to take account of the age, needs and interests of each child. Children are inspired and challenged to explore, experiment and cooperate with each other, which results in much discussion and problem solving, for example how to use a new recording device to take messages between two adults or how to tackle a very challenging climbing frame and reach the other side without falling off. The skilled intervention by adults, who know that effective learning happens through active involvement in a range of tasks and activities, leads to increased confidence, perseverance when things

don't quite work out and obvious enjoyment when they do succeed. Adults track each child's progress assiduously. The headteacher and Nursery coordinator regularly monitor comments resulting in comprehensive individual records of achievement. These records are evaluated three times a year against detailed local authority measures and the latest Early Years Foundation Stage guidance to show rates of progress and the standards each child has achieved. They are used very well to inform daily planning and the modifications that may be necessary for any child who is making less progress than expected. Parents and carers are fully involved in their child's learning from the outset and appreciate being partners in this process very much. Reception Year planning is beginning to address the more formal literacy and numeracy skills necessary for a smooth transition into the next school.

## **Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare**

### **Grade: 1**

Children's welfare, in all its aspects, is at the heart of the nursery's work. All relevant policies are fully in place to safeguard each child. The methods to deal with the welfare of vulnerable children and their parents and carers are outstanding. Health and safety procedures are consistently applied and regularly monitored. Parents and carers are fully confident that the nursery is a very safe place for their children to learn in. Children relate very well to their designated adult and this enhances their confidence and ability to make the best use of all that the nursery offers them. Children manage their personal needs very well and good hygiene practices are given a high priority. Very effective and detailed records mean that adults know in detail the welfare needs of every child. Child protection procedures are robust and staff training is continuously updated. There are clear and effective routines at the start and end of each session which contribute well to children's safety. The very extensive range of services organised within the children's centre contributes significantly to each child's well-being and that of their parents and carers.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

All practitioners are fully committed to the inspirational vision and leadership of the headteacher. In practice, this results in a high-quality curriculum, reflective thinking by all adults, and continuous discussion and training on how to improve young children's experiences in the nursery further. The nursery benefits greatly from having a headteacher who also sets the direction for the children's centre. This continuity of practice and involvement with parents and carers before their children start in the nursery pays great dividends. Induction is smooth, children know what to expect and adults know their needs in detail. The result is outstanding progress and high achievement. Governors are very active in working with the school and centre in reaching out to the local community and further afield. They carefully analyse how the curriculum is planned to engender a cohesive feeling among everyone who uses the centre and school. They are mindful of the proportion of young parents who do not drive and cannot easily access facilities that are in nearby towns. This accounts for a sizeable proportion of adults, some of whom have not yet started their families. Parents from minority ethnic backgrounds make a strong contribution to cultural understanding and have been responsible for the school making links with other countries through charitable activities. There is a very good feeling of belonging, which is much commented on by parents and carers. High-quality resources are chosen with care and there is a deliberate policy to have favourable ratios of adults to children.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do children in the EYFS achieve?</b>	1
The standards[1] reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?</b>	1
<b>How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?</b>	1



## Leadership and management

<b>How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B**

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

01 September 2009

Dear Children

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

I am writing to say thank you for helping me when I came to watch you playing with your friends. Your nursery is fantastic and I wish I could have stayed longer and perhaps made a sand castle or a dough cake. I hope Sally or Helen will read this letter to you and explain what I was doing as I went around the classroom and up into the garden. I also hope you continue to grow your vegetables in the allotment. I grow raspberries in my garden but sometimes the birds eat them. They must like them because they don't leave many behind.

Your mums and dads think you are lucky to go to such a splendid nursery and everyone works hard to make sure you have a wonderful time. I have asked Helen and Sally to plan some more activities when you move into the Reception class and stay at school all day. This means that you will learn to read books, do some mathematics and write some more stories, ready for your move to the primary school.

I do hope you have a lovely holiday and, if you are moving on, remember the good times you had at the Ace Centre Nursery.

Good wishes to everyone.

Yours faithfully

June Woolhouse

Lead Inspector