

# The Ace Centre Nursery School

Burford Road, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, OX7 5DZ

**Inspection dates** 11–12 September 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Exceptional leadership, high quality teaching and outstanding care have continued to secure excellent achievement for all children.
- Skilled planning for their learning and development means that the individual needs and interests of all children are fully met. Children who find learning difficult are exceptionally well supported.
- Exciting, challenging and imaginative activities and stimulating resources thoroughly engage children. Adult expertise in talking to children about their learning and joining in their play is very strong. This supports children's thinking skills and language development especially well.
- When children join the Nursery much emphasis is placed upon their personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development. They acquire these skills rapidly and quickly become confident in the setting.
- Children behave exceptionally well because of the very strong relationships with adults, who set an excellent example. Children are encouraged to be kind and thoughtful and as a result they thoroughly enjoy playing together, and are happy and cooperative.
- An extremely caring, warm and safe setting means that children feel very secure and love to come to the nursery. Most attend very regularly.
- Partnerships with parents are outstanding. All parents who completed a questionnaire fully recommend the nursery and some told the inspector, 'It is excellent.'
- An outstanding feature for many parents is the excellent liaison between the nursery and the children's centre which is on the same site. This results in very strong support being given to vulnerable families.
- The key to the consistent success of the nursery is the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. She is constant in her drive to secure excellent provision for all children.
- A highly experienced team of staff ably support the headteacher and are fully committed to their own professional development.
- Skilled governors carefully check the work of the nursery, challenge it in its bid to remain outstanding and support all of its work.
- The nursery provides a model of excellence, both nationally, as a previous Early Years Teaching Centre, and locally, offering strong support to many small local settings.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed children playing and learning in a wide range of activities, including those led by adults and some chosen by the children. All practitioners were observed during morning and afternoon sessions, including lunchtime. The inspector was sometimes accompanied by the headteacher.
- The inspector talked with children about their activities and looked at displays and records of their work.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including systems for checking children’s progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and the nursery school’s analysis of how well it is doing and how it plans to improve. Records of checks made on the quality of teaching and the minutes of the governing body meetings were also examined.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body and the nursery school staff, and a meeting took place with a school adviser from the local authority.
- The inspector spoke to parents and carers when they brought their children to the nursery in the morning and afternoon, and she took account of 25 responses to the online Parent View survey. Questionnaires completed by 10 members of staff were also considered.

## Inspection team

Anna Sketchley, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Ace Centre Nursery is an average-sized nursery and an integral part of the Ace Children's Centre. The headteacher leads both the centre and the nursery. Children start in the term after their third birthday and stay until they transfer to the Reception class in their chosen primary school.
- Children attend for either five mornings or five afternoons each week during term time. Working in partnership with the day care in the children's centre, the nursery offers parents the opportunity to extend their child's day with wrap-around provision. On such days, children bring a sandwich lunch from home and are offered a hot meal at tea time.
- The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs is broadly average overall.

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

- There are no current areas for improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- The inspirational and experienced headteacher is totally dedicated to ensuring that all children make the best possible progress. At the heart of her drive for excellence is an uncompromising commitment to understanding how young children learn best.
- High quality training in all areas of Early Years education has produced a highly effective team of staff and governors. The nursery has achieved national recognition as an Early Years Teaching Centre and now plays a leading role in a local network. The aspirational approach of the staff is enabling them to share their exemplary practice with many other settings. As a result, partnerships with other nurseries and pre-school settings are outstanding.
- The nursery demonstrates exceptional strength in its capacity to continue to secure outstanding provision and outcomes. This is not only the case for its own children but also in helping other settings achieve the same.
- Regular checks on children's progress and the quality of teaching mean that there is accurate information on what the nursery needs to do next. The whole-school community is involved in determining the correct priorities for development, which are then used as the basis for comprehensive action plans.
- Staff are very reflective and continually engage in professional dialogue and questioning that drives forward further improvement. All staff have challenging individual targets to meet to support both the nursery plans and their own development. This information is used robustly to make decisions about staff pay and progression.
- The nursery knows that some families may not always have the skills to help their children make the best possible start at primary school. There are early plans to address this. Recently appointed leaders have significant experience at primary level, and the nursery is wisely using this expertise to lead this development.
- During the inspection parents were very keen to speak personally to the inspector to give their views. They value the nursery extremely highly, especially its flexibility and liaison with the children's centre, and were overwhelmingly positive about its work.
- Equal opportunities for different groups of children are promoted very well and the nursery does not tolerate any form of discrimination. Children are exceptionally well cared for and the governing body and the school staff make sure that safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously to meet statutory requirements.
- The school and the local authority have worked successfully in partnership for some time. Other early years settings have benefited greatly from this work.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors monitor the work of the nursery carefully through regular reports and visits. As a result, they have a very good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. This enables them to ask challenging questions about its performance.
  - Governors use their experience and skills from the world of work well and, as a consequence, they are well organised and fulfil their statutory duties diligently.
  - They have a good understanding of information on children's progress, which enables them to ask searching questions of leaders.
  - They ensure that funding is used to maximum benefit. Staff pay and children's progress are carefully compared and considered to ensure good value for money. They set challenging objectives for the headteacher and review them regularly.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. School records over time, views expressed in the online parent questionnaire and informal discussions with parents confirm this view. No child has been prevented from attending the nursery because of poor behaviour.
- This is achieved because adults take great care to build trusting and respectful relationships with children. They listen carefully to them, helping them to understand their feelings.
- Excellent provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly supports their

emotional and personal development.

- Children play exceptionally happily together and because they are listened to by adults they learn to listen to one another. In their play there are lots of opportunities for them to learn to take turns, share and help one another. A fine example of this was when two boys pulled the very heavy water carrier up the hill together to fill up the stream they were making. Because children get on so well together they are eager to attend the nursery and play with their friends.
- No opportunities are missed for children to develop their personal and self-help skills. Snack and lunch times are excellent social occasions where children pour their own milk, pass fruit to one another and help wash up their plates and cups. They are encouraged to sit to the table nicely, learning to say 'please' and 'thank you'. As a result, their personal development is very strong.
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is outstanding. There are no recorded incidents of bullying or racism. Children say they feel very safe and parents signalled their unanimous agreement in the parent questionnaire and informal discussions.
- Many opportunities exist for children to assess and manage risks while engaged in adventurous activities, particularly during the weekly Forest School visits. In the nursery garden, boys building an imaginary fire and river decided to make large posters telling people to 'beware of the fire and the lake'.

### The quality of teaching

**is outstanding**

- An excellent balance exists between activities led by adults and those chosen by children. Staff continually discuss how well children are progressing and change plans daily according to children's needs and interests.
- Activities are very carefully linked so that children are constantly learning through many opportunities to play and explore. Their thinking and creativity are carefully fostered as they find new ways of doing things in the exciting surroundings.
- They learn rapidly because adults join in their play extremely sensitively, following children's ideas, posing questions and extending their language.
- Children master new skills quickly because adults work alongside them, coaching them and offering just the right amount of support. An excellent example was observed of a child learning to cut the fruit harvested from a tree in the nursery garden. First it was suggested that the fruit should be washed and why. After this the child then learned to cut the hard pear with a sawing motion using a real knife. Soon she was doing it very expertly and sharing the pear with others.
- Children concentrate really well and listen carefully because of the excellent relationships and high expectations of adults. This helped a small group of more able children make significant progress when learning the sounds that letters make.
- Children's learning of early literacy and numeracy skills is seamless because this is cleverly planned into the wide variety of exciting activities. Boys, especially, are being encouraged to tell the story of their play in readiness for writing.
- A wide variety of observations and photographs of each child's progress are carefully recorded in their learning journeys. These help adults to plan the next steps for development and illustrate important milestones in children's learning. Parents value being able to contribute to these, especially in giving information about the changing interests of their child.

### The achievement of pupils

**is outstanding**

- Children join the nursery with various levels of knowledge, skills and understanding, usually below those expected for their age. They make rapid progress because of outstanding provision.
- School information shows that during children's time in the nursery, gaps in attainment close in almost all areas and for all groups of children. By the time they leave the nursery the vast majority reach a good level of development across all areas of learning.
- The most able children are especially well challenged so that a significant proportion exceed the level expected and securely meet the Early Learning Goals that would normally be expected by the end of the Reception year.

- The excellent liaison and relationships between the work of the Children’s Centre and the nursery fully support families of children who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and they make excellent progress from their starting points. Children receive very effective support because as well as using their own expertise, adults are skilled at implementing advice from other professionals.
- A warm welcome awaits both children and parents at the beginning of each session. Children part from parents easily and settle quickly, even though some are very new. They confidently choose their own activities and become self-assured and independent. They move purposefully between the different areas and activities because resources are attractive and well prepared and kindle their interest and curiosity.
- Children gather together happily in a circle, practising their social skills as they sing their welcome song and use their fingers to make spectacles to ‘spot the visitor’. As they pass a ball they count as they go to see how many children have arrived. Joining in number songs with the actions means that no opportunities are missed to reinforce counting skills.
- During short focused activities in small groups with an adult they demonstrate great concentration and listening as, for example, they draw out objects from a ‘feely bag’, practising their letters and sounds and pre-reading skills.
- Copious opportunities are offered for children to develop their dexterity and control and pre-writing skills. A wide range of media secure imaginative play when sticking, cutting and mark making and using play dough.
- Adults talk to children continuously, explaining what they are doing, making suggestions, asking questions and joining in children’s activities. This significantly extends children’s vocabulary and continually develops their language and ability to communicate clearly.
- Children enjoy daily uninterrupted time to play and explore a wide range of stimulating and challenging activities. Exciting opportunities for learning and developing exist in the extremely generous outdoor area. Children strengthen their muscles and develop their control and balance as they climb and dig and run around obstacles.
- They develop a sense of awe and wonder for the natural world as they pick fruit and dig the potatoes they have planted. One really special moment occurred when they found some tiny eggs in the ground and identified them with the help of the internet.
- They are quick to ‘have a go’ as they develop their critical thinking and creativity, digging to make a river and building dens with willow. These activities are continuously built upon during children’s regular Forest School experiences.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122974
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	448123

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

<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>	67
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Georgia Mazower
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Ruff
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29–30 September 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01608 644440
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