

# The PACE Centre

Independent school standard inspection report

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Piccadilly Gate  
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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

The PACE Centre is an independent day special school for boys and girls aged from two to 12 years who have physical disabilities and additional needs such as sensory, learning and communication difficulties. It opened in 1997 and its early years and school provision were last inspected in April 2009. The main school is located in purpose-built premises in a residential area of Aylesbury, in Buckinghamshire. The centre also has additional classes and resources located in two local maintained special schools – Booker Park and Heritage House and it has places for children of four to five years in a PACE nursery known as Riverside House.

There are currently 57 pupils on roll, aged from three to 12 years, 32 of whom attend full time and 25 attend part time and are on dual placement with a mainstream or special school. All have a statement of special educational needs and 11 are at various stages of learning English as an additional language. One child receives free nursery education funding.

The nursery also includes eight children under the age of three years. Provision for these children was not inspected on this occasion; it will be inspected separately.

PACE is an acronym for Positive Achievement through Conductive Education. The school bases its work on the philosophy, principles and practices of Conductive Education that integrate education, care and therapy into a unified approach. The school is staffed by a range of professionals, including Conductive Education conductors, teachers, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and learning support staff. They work in collaborative, trans-disciplinary class teams.

The PACE Centre aims to provide an 'education for life, through an integrated curriculum that addresses the needs of the whole child, thus developing their social, emotional, communication, cognitive, self-care and physical abilities.'

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

## Evaluation of the school

The PACE Centre has maintained its very high standards since the last inspection and provides an outstanding quality of education. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work and extremely complimentary about the excellent support which they receive and about their children's exceptional achievements. Outstanding collaborative teaching and an outstanding integrated curriculum taught by dedicated trans-disciplinary teams enable pupils to make outstanding progress in their physical, communication and social development, as well as in their academic learning throughout the school. The strong school ethos, based on a problem-solving approach, is central to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to their outstanding behaviour. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their welfare, health and safety are outstanding. The school meets its aims extremely well and complies with all of the regulations for independent schools.

### Quality of education

The outstanding curriculum is exemplary in that it is fully integrated to closely meet pupils' individual needs and to prepare them extremely well for their future lives. From the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, the curriculum is individualised for each pupil on the basis of thorough initial assessments. The information from these assessments is used to draft high-quality individual educational plans that support pupils' learning extremely well. Long- and medium-term plans linked to National Curriculum documentation support the teaching of small groups of pupils in each subject of the National Curriculum. Trans-disciplinary teams use their collective expertise to plan activities that develop pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and independent learning while also developing their essential sensory-motor and perceptual skills.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the curriculum covers all the required areas of learning through a thematic approach that enables staff to take into account children's interests.

Personal, social and health education permeates the curriculum and is an essential component of conductive education. It is also taught as a discrete subject in upper Key Stage 2. Throughout the school, the curriculum is well balanced to equip pupils with life skills in addition to basic skills, with particular focus on personal care and hygiene, eating, posture, road safety, shopping, handling money and communicating with others. Very close partnerships with parents and carers that include training and coaching ensure a continuity of approach between school and home.

A wide range of resources, including ICT, are used very effectively to promote pupils' communication skills and give non-verbal pupils a voice. While pupils also have access to ICT to support parts of their academic learning, the school recognises that this use does not extend to everything that pupils learn. A rich programme of

educational visits broadens pupils' experiences and enhances all areas of the curriculum. Pupils are prepared extremely well for their future lives through the curriculum, residential visits that promote their independence and self-confidence and excellent links with their next school to ensure a smooth transition.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding throughout the school. The staff feel well supported by the programme of continuous development provided by the school. The staff bring together a wide range of expertise which, underpinned by very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, serves to plan tasks that are consistently challenging for each pupil. They deploy enormous energy to stimulate pupils' learning and to make the best possible use of time. The high adult-to-pupil ratio means that pupils nearly always receive one-to-one attention and staff gain a deep understanding of their needs and aptitudes. Staff make very effective use of questioning and resources to promote pupils' learning. Consistent focus on developing pupils' communication skills has a tremendously positive impact on their motivation and overall progress and serves the needs of pupils who have English as an additional language particularly well. Pupils are encouraged to apply effort through consistent verbal feedback from staff, an involvement in self-assessment and judicious use of rewards.

The assessment framework is centred on the continuous assessment of pupils' learning and development. Daily evaluations of lessons give trans-disciplinary teams useful information on how to best meet the needs of each pupil the next day. Regular annotation of individual educational plans informs the review of these plans and the frequency of the reviews. Procedures to track pupils' progress have further improved since the last inspection and now enable the school to track pupils' progress in small steps with reference to national norms. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff work with the local authorities to moderate their assessments of pupils' attainment. In the primary department, staff moderate their assessments through meetings with local schools and plan to further refine their moderation strategies by making links with a school whose pupils have similar needs to their pupils. The quality of annual reports to parents and carers has also improved greatly since the last inspection. Detailed comments clearly state what each pupil can do and needs to do to improve. Reports on pupils' physical development have the added advantage of providing an instant picture of their progress over one year.

As a direct result of outstanding teaching and an outstanding curriculum, all pupils, including those who learn English as an additional language, make outstanding progress in their physical, communication and personal development, as well as in their basic skills.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding throughout the school. Pupils are exceptionally well motivated by the problem-solving approach that is the cornerstone of the school's ethos and by the very high expectations which staff have of them. They are taught to view each step of their learning and development as a new challenge and are actively involved in their learning. This philosophy is

reflected in the names of the houses that underpin the pastoral system: 'pioneers, adventurers, conquerors and explorers'. Learning to control their movements so that they can learn more effectively and independently develops in pupils a 'can do' attitude, great determination and self-confidence. Pupils are very eager to learn and proud to show their work to visitors. Participation in school events such as Christmas plays and the recent 'Children's Challenge Day' at the Stoke Mandeville stadium showcases pupils' extraordinary achievements and boosts their self-esteem. Pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility for their own learning and development, supported by the consistent implementation of the reward system. As a result, their behaviour is outstanding. Parents and carers report that their children are very keen to attend The PACE Centre and attendance is good.

Excellent pastoral care fosters very positive relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves. Staff instil in each child an awareness of others and a sense of responsibility towards others in their home and school environments. This was visible, for example, during the Harvest festival in which pupils took turns to recite poems, sing songs and act parts, whether individually or in groups. Year 6 pupils can aspire to become head boy and head girl and help with lunch arrangements and reading to younger pupils. In the primary department, when pupils play games with visitors from local special schools once a month, they learn to socialise with pupils who have different special educational needs from theirs and to appreciate how they can help each other. However, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children who are not in dual placement with another setting do not have as many opportunities as those who attend part time to extend their social skills beyond the immediate school environment. Pupils' awareness of diversity is promoted well by the diversity of the pupil and staff population, religious education and multicultural resources. Pupils learn about British public institutions through the curriculum and educational visits. They gain first-hand experiences of democracy through the election of house captains. The very rich programme of educational visits enhances pupils' cultural development and independence extremely well.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding throughout the school. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for because safeguarding matters, including safer recruitment, are given utmost priority. The staff's work is very effectively supported by up-to-date policies and procedures for child protection, anti-bullying, behaviour, first aid and health and safety, and by extensive training refreshed at appropriate intervals. These policies are implemented consistently and result in an orderly, warm and caring environment in which adults know pupils as individuals. There is a suitable number of staff trained in fire safety and in first aid for the relevant age group in each site. Pupils and families have access to two qualified nurses. Thorough risk assessments are carried out for on-site and off-site activities and frequently reviewed. Consequently, pupils feel safe, are happy and visibly love the staff. Parents and carers have full confidence in the school's ability to safeguard pupils in all circumstances. The emphasis on motor learning ensures that pupils are physically active all day. In addition, four classes have weekly swimming

lessons at one of the four sites. Pupils learn the importance of healthy eating from Nursery onwards and regularly take part in food preparation activities.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The proprietors ensure that robust recruitment procedures are implemented to ascertain the suitability of all adults to work with children. All the required checks are carried out and recorded in a single central register that is a model of good practice.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

On the four sites, the premises provide specialist teaching accommodation that enables safe and effective learning. The school makes effective use of local swimming facilities. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the primary department, there is adequate space for outdoor play and gardening activities.

### **Provision of information**

Parents, carers, placing authorities and others receive accurate and up-to-date information, through the website, handbooks and newsletters. Parents and carers appreciate the school's open-door policy and feel very well informed about their children's progress. They are exceptionally positive about all aspects of the school's work.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The complaints procedure meets all requirements.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

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

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Further extend the use of ICT across all areas of academic learning.
- In the primary department, further refine strategies to moderate pupil assessments as planned.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, widen links with local schools to ensure that all children have opportunities to extend their social skills and independence beyond the immediate setting.

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	Good	satisfactory	Inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special day school for pupils with motor disorders and associated sensory, communication and learning needs		
<b>Date school opened</b>	March 1997		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–12 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 19	Girls: 13	Total: 32
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 9	Girls: 16	Total: 25
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 28	Girls: 29	Total: 57
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£30,000 to £50,000		
<b>Address of school</b>	Philip Green House Coventon Road Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP19 9JL		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 392739		
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:amanda.richardson@thepacecentre.org">amanda.richardson@thepacecentre.org</a>		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Amanda Richardson (Chief Executive)		
<b>Proprietor</b>	The PACE Centre Ltd (registered charity)		

**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.**

19 October 2012

Dear Pupils



### **Inspection of The PACE Centre, Aylesbury HP19 9JL**

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team so warmly when we visited your school recently. We greatly enjoyed meeting you, seeing you learn and talking to you about school life. We were impressed by your excellent behaviour, eagerness to communicate and learn, determination to control your movements, self-confidence and sense of responsibility. You are proud of your achievements and you love the school and the staff. We found that your school provides you with an excellent education and that it meets all government requirements.

This is what we like best about your school:

- The adults in each class work very well together to help you develop good physical skills, become independent and learn a wide range of subjects at the same time. They care for you a lot and teach you extremely well.
- You make excellent progress in your physical and personal development and in your academic learning.
- You take part in lots of educational visits that broaden your experiences.
- You feel safe and understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and of exercising daily.

In order to make your school even better, we have asked your school to:

- increase the use of ICT in all areas of your academic learning
- help teachers in the primary department to moderate their assessments of your work by giving them the opportunity to do this in collaboration with teachers in a school that is similar to yours
- in the Early Years Foundation Stage, widen links with local schools to ensure that all children have opportunities to extend their social skills and independence beyond the immediate setting.

You will help your teachers if you continue to work as hard as we saw during the inspection and if you maintain your excellent behaviour.

Yours sincerely

Michèle Messaoudi  
Lead inspector