

Ambleside Centre

Ambleside Close, Reading RG5 4JJ

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The Ambleside Centre is a very special place to learn. Adults and children work together in a strong partnership so that learning takes place naturally and in a very skilled way.
- Children make excellent progress in their physical, social and communication development, planning what they are going to do and explaining what they have done.
- Every minute is used exceptionally well by staff to have continual conversations with children about what they are doing. Excellent questions enable children to try new experiences and make continual discoveries.
- The whole Nursery, indoors, outdoors and all the resources are laid out so that children have an excellent choice of equipment and activities always available to them.
- Children behave extremely well. They are usually playing with a friend and so involved in what they are doing that even minor disagreements are very rare.
- All the staff work exceptionally well as a team, characterised by very high quality professional relationships with each other, the children and parents.
- Leaders and managers involve children, parents and the governing body in working out how to continually improve. They make changes in response to suggestions and are always looking for new ideas and learning new things together. These are very effective and this is one of the reasons for the outstanding teaching and achievement.
- Many people visit the Nursery from other pre-school providers to find out about outstanding practice but the school rightly recognises it could do more to share staff skills and ideas.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 15 sessions or part sessions of teaching and learning activities in the Nursery, taught by three teachers and led by key workers, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. The inspector also read books with children.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior managers, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, the teacher of the deaf and there were informal discussions with children and parents.
- There were 21 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the inspector took account of feedback from parents' questionnaires undertaken by the school. The inspector looked at the Nursery's documents, including records of assessment and children's progress, planning for improvement, monitoring of teaching and learning and records about attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Janet Dinsmore, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The maintained Nursery provision, which is similar in size to other nursery schools is known as Meadows and is part of the Early Years provision including Children’s Centre services at the Ambleside Centre.
- The Nursery sessions run from 9.00–12.00 and 1.00–4.00 in term time. Children attend 15 hours Nursery provision and parents can pay for extra sessions. There are flexible arrangements for wraparound care from 8.00–6.00 and the school holidays.
- There are higher than average proportions of children who are from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language.
- There is a higher than average proportion of children supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- There is a much higher than average proportion of children supported at school action, the majority of these experiencing delay or impairment in speech and language development.
- At the time of the inspection, no children were supported by pupil premium funding.
- There are two places for pre-school children with statements of special educational needs for hearing impairment. They are supported by daily visits from teachers of the deaf, based at a local authority hearing impairment resource base in another primary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop partnership arrangements to share outstanding practice with a wider community of pre-school providers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children start at the Nursery with skills at or below those expected for their age. By the time they leave, they have made good and, in some cases, exceptional progress, and many have skills beyond those which would be expected. Consequently, they are very well prepared for school. They are confident, happy and independent learners.
- Children make excellent progress with physical development. They have opportunities to be involved in many different physical activities, both indoors and out. They learn to pass balls, dig with big spades and use a curved ladder as a bridge, skilfully turning around so that they can climb down the other side.
- Use of hands and fingers is practised every day with an activity involving an extensive range of different writing and drawing materials. Children quickly develop these skills and record pictures of their family and begin to write letters and their names. They also represent sounds they are hearing with marks on paper, enjoying the music and recognising 'fast' and 'slow' and the moods created, for example identifying music as 'spooky'.
- Children choose and plan their activities independently; they choose books to read and share stories with adults. They play imaginative games together very well and enjoy the play-house, serving each other food, dressing up and discussing which animals they are going to include in the farm. They enjoy construction with boxes, glue and tape, investigating the best ways of joining things together and how elastic bands make sounds as well.
- They learn to use numbers and calculation in real situations. During the inspection, the Christmas fair was designed so that children could purchase small presents and count out the pennies they needed; this was highly successful, involving staff and parents and giving the children a real experience of shopping and decision making. Every day, breadsticks are counted in key worker groups and children begin to learn how to double numbers as they find out how many are needed.
- Children who are new to learning English make accelerated progress in understanding and speaking English and those from minority ethnic groups make good progress as do all groups of children. There are examples of rapid and sustained progress for individual children with physical disabilities, hearing impairment and special educational needs because of the individually focused support that they receive from highly trained staff working closely with other agencies that support the family. The few children who arrive in the Nursery with little or no spoken language make outstanding progress, and the excellent conversations and integrated work with the speech therapist ensure that children with language difficulties also make rapid progress.
- Children are very independent; they can put on their coats, find their pegs, find their names to record their arrival and tidy all the equipment away at the end of the session because the resources are very well organised to enable them to do this. They wash their hands before eating and comment if a friend then puts their hands on the floor to make them dirty again.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- All adults work exceptionally well to ensure that each individual child makes at least good progress with his or her learning. When children have decided what to do, adults become involved in the play to question and have conversations that develop learning. For example, when using paint, adults discussed which colours children could choose and then extended the conversation to investigate how the paint drips from the brush depending on its thickness.
- The outdoor environment is used well and children investigated the beautiful effects of hard frost on the plants and cobwebs, expressing their fascination and delight. A group of children developed treasure maps representing areas of the Nursery, marking where they had hidden an object and digging to the bottom of the outdoor sandpit to see if they could find imaginary treasure. Adults joined in with this activity at different times, liaising with each other about the

progress of the game and extending children's understanding and ability to explain what they were doing by excellent questions and suggestions.

- Children who may come to Nursery a bit upset or anxious are comforted by the key worker for the child; who works very well with parents, talking to them and forming strong relationships that support the whole family. This means that the child's progress in learning and development is constantly checked and parents contribute in writing to the long observations of how their child learns before these go into the learning journey record. This results in any gaps in normal development being spotted very quickly and the key workers and other expert staff can take action to provide different learning to enable the child to make good progress.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs, for example hearing impairment, speech, language and social communication difficulties and physical difficulties, are supported extremely well by skilled staff. There is a speech and language therapist working in the Nursery for two days each week, who makes an excellent contribution to the expertise of the other staff at the Nursery and the progress the children make. Those with recognised hearing impairment are excellently supported by daily visits by a teacher of the deaf from the local authority resource base in another primary school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Children behave extremely well as they are so involved in what they are doing and cooperate together so superbly that incidents of bullying are non-existent. If there is a minor disagreement, all staff deal with it in exactly the same way so that the children quickly learn how to do this for themselves and parents comment that they also learn about this and this helps with family relationships at home. It is extremely unusual to see children playing on their own; they choose to join with others, both children and adults.
- Children know how to stay safe and assess risk for themselves; for example, in a constructed balance bar, they could decide how to move the plank so that it would not wobble. They put scissors away when they have finished with them and know how to use them safely. They learnt how to turn around to come down a ladder and to judge whether jumping down was safe or not.
- The site is totally secure and the entrance monitored continually by a pass entry system and vigilant well-trained staff. Parents say that their children are safe at Nursery and very well cared for by the staff. They value the relationship with the key workers because they can talk to them every day and pass on information and concerns and also find out how their children have been learning and what they have been doing. Children display their work on individual boards around the Nursery and this is just one example of how each individual, unique child is valued.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The senior leadership team are clearly focused and ambitious to continually improve the Nursery for the benefit of children and their parents. They have clearly designed plans to do this which are constantly reviewed and amended as they check how well they are progressing with them. Governors, parents and the children are involved in making suggestions for changes and this ensures that the whole community works together for improvement. All staff work exceptionally hard to ensure all children are treated equally and that there is no discrimination.
- The outstanding practice at the Nursery is highly valued by the local authority and the staff are used to support improvements in other settings. This has been particularly effective in improving standards in these settings. The innovative forms of recording progress and the quality of learning conversations are not yet widely shared enough beyond the immediate locality. The local authority provides a minimum level of support for the governing body for the performance management of the headteacher.
- Senior leaders have strong partnerships with local schools and the wider community to ensure that children's transition to school is smooth, and schools comment on the independence of the children who come from the Ambleside Centre. The knowledge and experience of parents and

staff from different cultures are used well to extend all children's experience of these, so fitting them well for life in modern democratic Britain. These improvements have happened since the previous inspection and demonstrate that the Nursery can continue to provide high quality education.

- Senior teaching staff work very closely with teachers and key workers to ensure that excellent practice is maintained and the skills of staff are continually improved. The programme of further training is well matched to any needs that are found through regular discussion and observations of staff and their work in recording children's progress. For example, recent training for assisting discussions with parents has been particularly effective in reaching solutions for the benefit of all.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are committed and passionate about the Nursery and maintaining its very high quality. The governing body has a wide range of skills from business and education and undertake regular training so that they provide stimulus and challenge for the senior leadership team. The governance and senior leaders of the Nursery and Children's Centre are combined and this enables governors to make strategic decisions for the whole centre for the benefit of children and their families, for example the provision of courses for parents in the Children's Centre as a result of liaison with Nursery staff when identified needs arise for positive parenting, healthy eating and English as an additional language courses. Governors have a good understanding of performance management. They ensure that the salary progression of the headteacher and all teaching staff is linked to high quality teaching and learning measured through observations by senior staff and governor visits.

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

Unique reference number	109759
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	401076

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Laura Saunders
Headteacher	Philip Armstrong
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 April 2010
Telephone number	0118 3776444
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