

# Norcot Early Years Centre

82 Lyndhurst Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6UB

## Inspection dates

21–22 October 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.

- Leaders support staff exceptionally well, helping them continually develop their understanding of how children learn. This leads to outstanding practice.
- Children love learning and really enjoy their time at the centre. They settle very quickly into the day-to-day routines, learn to behave very well and revel in the range of opportunities available to them.
- Teaching is outstanding. Staff expertly check exactly what each child needs to learn next, so their learning progresses well. They use every chance to help children get better at speaking and listening.
- Children achieve exceptionally well. Many start nursery with poor skills in speaking, listening and mathematics. By the time they leave they show that they can do these things as well or better than children of the same age.
- Centre leaders have excellent systems for checking how well children are doing. This helps them to know what is working and what needs to be changed; for example, they have identified that at lunchtime children would benefit from having more quiet places to play and that staff supervision is not as highly effective as at other times of the day.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the centre. They feel their children are learning well and like the frequent chances to be involved through events such as harvest celebration and 'learning through nature' sessions.
- Centre leaders are very outward looking. They have used their impressive links with other schools to share their own excellent practice and to gain new ideas.
- Governors are very supportive of school leaders but are not afraid to ask challenging questions. They rightly expect to be given a range of clear information so they can check that children continue to do outstandingly well.
- Parents and carers report that their children feel extremely safe and secure, including those with specific difficulties. This is because relationships between all adults and children at the centre are warm, trusting and built on respect, and because systems to keep children safe are robust.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent nearly nine hours observing children learning in focused groups, and in activities led by adults and those children chose for themselves. Senior leaders joined inspectors for some of this time.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, governors and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors talked informally to children during observation times.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including self-evaluation and development planning, documents relating to safeguarding and child protection, minutes of meetings of the governing body and information on the progress children make.
- The inspectors looked at the special folders put together by staff and parents and carers, showing the course of children's learning.
- Inspectors took account of the 10 responses to the online Parent View survey and the views expressed by parents and carers spoken to during the visit. Recent surveys carried out by the school were also taken into account.

## Inspection team

Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson, Lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

Amanda Gard

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The centre is smaller than the average-sized school and is housed in two buildings. The majority of children attend part time either five mornings or five afternoons, although some stay for additional paid-for sessions. The majority of children attend for four or five terms.
- The majority of children have White British backgrounds with a small number from Eastern Europe and India. The children who speak English as an additional language are often at the early stages of speaking English when they start at the centre.
- The headteacher provides support to other local schools.
- The school offers breakfast, lunch and tea clubs and also provides a holiday club during school holidays.
- The centre has recently started offering places to funded two-year-olds.
- The centre also provides day care in a separate building under a separate registration. This was not inspected as part of this inspection.
- The centre links closely with the local children's centre cluster.

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

- Offer more provision at lunchtime for quiet places to play and ensure staff support is as good as it is during other times of the day.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- Senior leaders have very high expectations and a clear vision for the continuing development of the centre. This is shared by the whole staff team. Senior leaders never stand still in their pursuit of excellence, for example going to Norway to look at outdoor learning before setting up the 'learning through nature' project.
- Leaders have a very positive relationship with the local authority, and the headteacher has built useful links with local schools. This helps all staff to share good ideas to improve even further.
- Middle leaders work well with teachers from other schools to check their assessments of children's work by agreeing which work is of a similar standard. This confirms that staff are making the right judgements about how well children are achieving.
- There is a strong culture of ongoing training for staff which is closely linked to targets for development. Staff are keen to continually extend their knowledge so that they can create even better learning opportunities for children.
- Leaders regularly check that children always receive the best possible teaching. This has resulted in the high standards seen at previous inspections being maintained.
- Senior leaders gather information about how well children achieve in a variety of ways. This means they have a clear picture of what is working and what is not. Adjustments are then made to ensure that all children make excellent progress.
- Leaders create detailed plans to improve the centre. All staff, governors and parents and carers are invited to give their views. Everyone knows exactly how the centre will improve even further.
- Senior leaders have developed very effective ways of helping children to make the move from home into nursery and then from nursery into school. These systems help children settle very quickly so they can immediately learn well.
- The exciting curriculum gives children exceptional opportunities to develop skills and knowledge across all seven areas of learning both inside and outside. The 'learning through nature project' is inspirational. All children benefit from the opportunities it provides to learn about nature while developing skills such as perseverance and resilience.
- Children's personal, social and emotional development is well promoted through the rich curriculum. There are opportunities for children to learn about celebrations that are important to them such as birthdays but also celebrations from across the world such as Christmas and Diwali. This prepares them well for life in Britain today.
- Staff and governors are very successful in creating an environment in which everyone is included and has an equal chance. At times this may be through meeting a child's needs very specifically, for example by providing an individual dish of food at snack time.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors contribute hugely to the success of the school. They provide both support and challenge, expecting clear answers to probing questions. In order to maintain the high quality of teaching, governors support the headteacher well in effectively managing the performance of staff and awarding pay rises based on staff effectiveness. Governors have a clear understanding of excellent teaching and how this helps children to learn. They regularly look with senior leaders at information on how well children are doing and use this information to help them decide on future spending. Safeguarding responsibilities are taken extremely seriously by governors and they are vigilant in ensuring that the centre meets these and all other requirements.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****are outstanding****Behaviour**

- Children sustain high levels of concentration because they are excited and interested by the activities available to them, such as making imaginary birthday cakes in the sandpit. They show exceptionally positive attitudes to learning in groups or independently, inside and outside. The behaviour of children is outstanding.
- Relationships throughout the school are exemplary. Staff know the children very well; they model excellent behaviour, are calm, clear and have consistent expectations resulting in a community built on mutual respect. A parent reported her child would come to the centre seven days a week if she could.
- When, infrequently, children are upset, they are well supported by adults. Children are kind and caring towards each other: one child commented, 'We look after each other'. Staff are highly skilled in sensitively supporting children with behavioural needs and continually take opportunities to support children to learn highly developed negotiation and problem-resolving skills.
- Over the lunchtime occasionally behaviour becomes slightly boisterous. This is because staff are less highly trained and skilled at managing behaviour through talk and timely interventions. The environment of the hall does not easily lend itself to creating a quiet space. Senior leaders are aware of this and are developing this new team.

**Safety**

- The centre's work to keep children safe is outstanding. The site is very secure with good systems for signing in and out. Risk assessments are fully in place showing adults have thought carefully about potential hazards and how to prevent accidents. Parents and carers say overwhelmingly that their children are safe.
- There is a strong focus on learning how to stay safe. Children have opportunities to use tools, play with sticks, climb trees and become very adept at negotiating steep steps on the sharply sloping centre site. Parents and carers are very supportive of the staff's approach to teaching children to understand and manage risk for themselves. This is particularly demonstrated in 'learning through nature' sessions, when children learn how to cross roads safely and can run freely across a large expanse of local park, because they know exactly when to stop.
- More vulnerable families receive excellent support through staff working effectively with other agencies. This contributes to keeping children safe.
- Although children do not have to attend nursery, the centre has a clear policy which explains how important it is for children to come regularly. Non-attendance is rigorously followed up particularly in the case of the most vulnerable children.

**The quality of teaching****is outstanding**

- Teaching is outstanding because staff have a deep understanding of how young children learn and develop. They use this knowledge to inform everything they plan and do with the children, responding flexibly to capitalise on children's interests. This results in children making excellent progress with their learning.
- More able children are supported in achieving more by skilled staff interactions. Staff introduce children to new words and encourage them to think more deeply, for example in one session, when considering why a spider had built its web in a particular place.
- Many children start at the centre with limited speech and language. There is rightly a high emphasis on developing their communication skills. Staff use signing to help children to develop understanding and become more familiar and confident to use a widening vocabulary. Staff are excellent at modelling clear language structures as a natural part of every conversation.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are very well promoted across all areas of learning. For example, children are encouraged to write Diwali cards and are part of highly motivating and engaging story telling sessions. Outdoors others went on a pretend boat trip looking for dinosaurs while singing a song using rhyming words. Newsletters encourage parents and carers to practise phonic sounds at home using specific rhymes. The tricycles and drinking cups have numerals and dots on to encourage counting. Throughout the centre there are examples of numbers and letters for children to see and use in their play.
- The 'learning through nature' project is outstanding. It provides children with opportunities they are otherwise unlikely to experience, such as working with ropes and building a mud slide. Through these

exciting practical experiences the children develop their language, confidence and ability to work as part of a team. Leaders have documented how the project has had a positive effect on all children's achievement in all areas of learning.

- Staff continually talk to children about their learning, and support them so that they think, justify and explain their understanding and can take the next steps.
- Children with special educational needs are very well supported one to one, and in small groups, to develop the social and language skills they need for learning.
- Involvement of parents and carers is outstanding. Staff encourage them to become actively engaged in their children's learning in many different ways. For example, children take a soft toy home and write about what they have done together, parents and carers are invited to join in with frequent celebrations in the centre linked to topics such as harvest, and families attend weekend events to see how their children learn through nature.
- Staff excel at making sure there is access for all children to the curriculum by providing clear structures and safe boundaries while enabling children to be innovative and challenge themselves.
- Every available space is used for learning. The area outside is particularly important for children growing up in a very built-up area with limited opportunities to experience the natural world. Children can grow vegetables and collect eggs from the centre's hens, and then use these ingredients in their cooking activities. Every opportunity is exploited to develop and deepen children's understanding of the natural world.

### The achievement of pupils

**is outstanding**

- Children join the nursery with skills that are considerably lower than the levels typical for their age in all areas of learning, but particularly mathematics. A large number of children have very low levels of spoken language, poor attention and listening skills, and social and communication difficulties.
- The outstanding teaching, the exceptionally well-planned environment inside and outside, the very effective use of the centre's wider surroundings, the highly engaging curriculum and outstanding relationships all contribute to helping children make rapid and sustained progress.
- Children who speak English as an additional language are valued by everyone. For example, at a welcome session children say 'hello' in different languages such as French and Hindi. Words that are important to a child are listed in their 'Learning Journal' in their home language, to help ease the move from home to school.
- Children from all groups make equally good progress.
- More able children are appropriately challenged. They are well supported by activities such as planning a walk to the local supermarket to buy items they have listed, and being responsible for paying with the correct money. This helps to extend their thinking further.
- Children with special educational needs are effectively supported through early action. Teachers carefully identify what support they need. They liaise highly effectively with other agencies to ensure that the children and their families get the full range of help available to them.
- The school is highly committed to equal opportunities. Leaders ensure that vulnerable children are supported at the centre sensitively by staff in small nurturing groups. Parents and carers in need are helped by the family support worker directly or by signposting to relevant courses and groups thus aiding home stability and supporting children's learning.
- The vast majority of children move on to school at four with skills across all the areas of learning that are at and sometimes above that which is typical for a four-year-old.

## 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>	109751
<b>Local authority</b>	Reading
<b>Inspection number</b>	448100

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	90
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Adam Hewitt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Diana Heath
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24–25 January 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01189 375577
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