

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Ambleside Centre

Ambleside Close, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire RG5 4JJ

Inspection date: 23 November 2021

Outcome

The Ambleside Centre continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children love their time in this happy, welcoming and inclusive school. Children move eagerly and confidently from one high-quality activity to the next. They behave exceptionally well because they are engrossed in what they are doing. The nursery is a hive of activity. It hums with the gentle sound of children playing, talking and learning. Children are very safe in the school's nurturing and well-organised environment. The warm and trusting relationships they develop with adults help them to feel valued and secure. Staff take good care of children and are alert to their well-being. Concerns about bullying hardly ever arise, but leaders respond seriously and sensitively when they do.

The nursery prepares all children exceptionally well for the next stage of their schooling. Adults have the highest expectations of all children. They combine these with a deep understanding of each child's needs. Skilful teaching, combined with caring and sensitive support, mean that all children make exceptional progress in their learning and development. Staff expertise in teaching children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) means that these children learn just as well as other children. Their progress is impressive. Children with SEND play a full and active part in all aspects of nursery life.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have established a carefully constructed and well-sequenced curriculum. This, and adults' thorough knowledge of how to teach young children, ensure that children learn exceptionally well across all areas of learning. Adults use every opportunity to support children's development with great skill. For example, during the inspection, an adult capitalised on a child's enthusiasm for the playhouse to develop language skills, encouraging him to repeat phrases such as 'knock-knock', 'come in' and 'bye-bye'. Adults continuously assess children's learning. They know exactly how to support each child's development.

Children thrive in the nursery's positive and nurturing atmosphere. Adults' success in settling children into routines is startling. Children respond exceptionally well to adults' high expectations. They quickly learn the importance of 'good sitting', 'good looking' and 'good listening'. The setting is highly effective in helping children to develop independence skills. At lunchtime, for example, children confidently serve themselves while seated at tables. During the inspection, they happily helped themselves to potatoes, carrots, shepherd's pie and a drink of water without fuss. Adults are always on hand to provide help wherever needed.

The school gives the development of children's language and vocabulary a very high priority. Children are routinely encouraged to talk about what they are doing and to express opinions and ideas. They learn to do this confidently because they know that adults will value what they have to say.

The nursery supports the development of early reading extremely well. It provides a wide range of appealing books that are displayed throughout. Children learn how to hold a book, turn the pages and talk about the story. They love listening to adults reading them stories. Adults use discussions with children skilfully to develop reading skills. For example, during the inspection, an adult used 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' to ask children about what they could see in the pictures, and what they thought might happen next in the story.

Children have plenty of opportunities to explore early mathematics throughout the nursery and learn very well. For example, activities with modelling clay are used to develop children's understanding of 'more than' and 'less than', bead games are used to practise counting to five, and shape games are used to develop understanding of the names and properties of shapes.

The nursery usually provides children with lots of activities to learn about the world, from collecting leaves to posting letters. Speakers visit to talk to children about different cultures and faiths, and children learn about festivals, such as Diwali and Christmas. The nursery is looking forward to reinstating visits, visitors and special events as pandemic restrictions begin to ease.

Leaders provide a strong steer for their staff team. They make sure that adults are well qualified and knowledgeable about the early years curriculum. Staff feel well supported. They say that leaders prioritise their welfare.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders give children's safety an appropriately high priority. Adults are alert to any signs that may cause concern. They report any worries promptly following the school's well-established reporting procedures. Leaders monitor records carefully. They work closely with agencies, such as children's services, to ensure that children and their families receive the help they need.

Children are taught that their views matter. They learn that they can say 'no' if they would rather not hold another's hand, for example. The nursery is well organised. Children can move safely freely between activities.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in December 2021.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	109759
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10200402
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Samantha McMahon
Headteacher	Kerrie Clifford
Website	www.ambleside.wokingham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers specialist provision for children with a hearing impairment. Children who require this provision are placed by the local authority. No children with hearing impairment were attending at the time of the inspection.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other members of staff. They also spoke with three governors, including the chair of governors, and a local authority representative.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in literacy, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. They looked at curriculum plans, met with a group of staff, and visited all areas of the school. Inspectors spoke with parents and carers informally at the start of the morning and afternoon nursery sessions. They also considered the views of those parents and staff who had completed Ofsted's surveys.

- The inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding records and documents, including the single central record of checks on staff. They also met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed the school's safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lizzie Jeanes

Ofsted Inspector

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