

# Inspection of an outstanding school: The ACE Centre Nursery School

Burford Road, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire OX7 5DZ

---

Inspection date:

18 October 2023

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Children arrive happy and excited to learn in the school's inspiring environment. The start of the day begins calmly with well-crafted activities to support children's learning and interests. Caring and nurturing adults interact wonderfully with the children to check in on them and get them enthused for the day ahead.

The school has a longstanding history of the highest expectations for children. It works in partnership with parents and others with an aim to provide children with the best possible start. Staff know that a solid grounding in early years education sets children up for life. Parents are educated about the importance of regular attendance.

Very quickly, children settle and know what is expected of them and studiously tidy up after themselves. Children are kind and have good manners. Mealtimes demonstrate eager children who avidly chat and eat sensibly.

The exceptionally well-designed outdoor grounds promote children's curiosity and development in understanding the world around them. The school's 'big experiences' forge strong community links where children attend a theatre, celebrate festivals, travel on a minibus and walk to the local library. Visitors pop into school to share what they do, so children learn about people's different jobs.

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

New leadership has brought a shared vision and drive in striving to continue to be a beacon of excellence. Establishing the right culture that unites staff together has been the main priority since the headteacher joined the school. The local authority has supported the school in bringing about fresh ideas and introducing effective ways of working that reduce staff's workload and promote well-being for all.

Governors themselves have made improvements to their work in supporting the school. Previously, they had not probed enough about the impact of the school's actions and had been too trusting of what they had been told. Governors are now clearer about their core functions. They recognise the need for further training to strengthen their assurance that children are receiving a high-quality education.

The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a greater number of children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), with significant gaps in communication and language and personal, social and emotional development. These prime areas of learning have rightly been given greater weighting in the school's curriculum. Within an area of learning, the school is clear about the end points that children need to reach for starting Reception Year, with steps of knowledge identified and logically sequenced.

The school's innovative setting is well planned so it does not overstimulate children's learning. Very strong practice exists in adult-directed activities. Here, staff introduce children to new ideas and question children to check for understanding. Staff are adept in picking up gaps in children's knowledge and reteaching content as needed. However, when children are engaged in independent play, the quality of implementation diminishes. Staff do not always skilfully intervene to guide children's knowledge practice. This can lead to children not always learning as much as they could.

The curriculum starts with effective screening of children to pinpoint any speech and language concerns. This is combined with information from the progress check at age two. This serves well in the early identification of children with possible SEND. A focus on communication and language is evident across the provision. Staff clearly articulate ambitious vocabulary in their conversations with children. Stories are read daily and children enjoy singing and reciting poems by heart. A well-matched intervention programme for communication and language strongly meets the needs of children with SEND.

Children enjoy their learning activities, with many deeply engrossed in what they do. Although routines are firmly established to support children's self-regulation and independence, staff do not follow these through consistently well. This can have a negative impact on the behaviour of some children. Children's wider development is well promoted, with the school involving parents and the wider community to build lasting memories.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- There remain some inconsistencies in the effective implementation of the curriculum. When children are engaged in independent play, it is not always clear what prior

knowledge they are practising. Furthermore, some children's behaviour is less positive as they are off task and staff do not spot this straight away. The school needs to provide further professional development to staff so that teaching practice and the work set enable every child to meet the ambitious aims of the curriculum.

- Governors are continuing to develop their understanding of all their responsibilities to effectively hold the school to account. They are beginning to challenge more and test out what they are told. Governors require further training in scrutinising all aspects of school life so that children benefit from the best education possible.

## 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in September 2014.

## 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.

## Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 122974   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Oxfordshire  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10287933   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Nursery  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Maintained   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3 to 5   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 41   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>             | Kate Barlow  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Lynn Jenkins (Executive Headteacher)   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.ace-chipping-norton.co.uk">www.ace-chipping-norton.co.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 20 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005                         |

## Information about this school

- The headteacher started her role in September 2022. In June 2023, the school collaborated with Grandpont Nursery School in Oxford. The headteacher is now executive headteacher of both schools.
- The school shares the same building with The ACE Centre Charity who provides early years childcare to children under the age of three. This has a separate early years registration to the school and is inspected separately.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and held a telephone conversation with a school improvement adviser from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and expressive arts and design. To do this, they met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, had discussions with staff, spoke to children, visited classrooms and outdoor learning environments and observed children learning, playing and interacting with staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and children; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys. The team inspector spoke to parents at the gate on the morning of the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement priorities, policies, curriculum documents, behaviour records, information about children with SEND and minutes of governors' meetings.

## Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tracy Good

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023