

The Ambleside Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109759
Local Authority	Wokingham District Council
Inspection number	288488
Inspection date	28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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	3-5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Taylor
Headteacher	Mrs G Allen
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2001
School address	Ambleside Close Woodley RG5 4JJ
Telephone number	0118 3776444
Fax number	0118 540424

Age group	3-5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ambleside was established as a children's centre in November 2006 offering extended services for young children. The provision for day care and nursery education is integrated. The day care provision was inspected in December 2005. This inspection focused on the nursery section known as The Meadows, which developed from the well-established nursery, last inspected in October 2001. The centre incorporates the local authority's family information service and early education team. The majority of children are from White British backgrounds. Children's levels of development as they enter the nursery are broadly typical of the age group.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The quality of nursery education in this centre is outstanding. The aim to 'develop independent learners who have high self-esteem, self-confidence and care for others' is met extremely successfully. The attention paid to children's individual needs is excellent and promotes outstanding achievement in both their academic and personal development. The centre has the overwhelming support of parents, summed up by one who commented, 'I cannot sing the school's praises enough.' Inspired by the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the skilled team of teachers and support staff provide rich opportunities for children's learning.

Children's behaviour is exemplary and they have remarkable levels of independence. This is because adults guide children without spoon-feeding them. Children thoroughly enjoy themselves. The calm and purposeful atmosphere ensures that they feel safe and children have an excellent awareness of how to stay healthy. From the earliest age, they share responsibility for the environment, selecting resources for themselves and putting things away in their allotted places.

The richness and variety of the curriculum, combined with high quality teaching, mean that learning provides constant pleasure, excitement and adventure. Underpinned by their positive attitudes to learning, children make excellent progress in developing early literacy and numeracy skills.

Parents appreciate the high standard of care and support provided for children, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Again, as a parent writes, 'I am continually impressed with the care and attention given to my son.' Meticulous attention is paid to assessing and recording how well children are getting on, so adults can plan the next small steps in children's learning and share these with them.

Self-evaluation is well established and accurate. Although the centre rightly recognises its many strengths, there is no complacency but a common determination to improve further by extending the range of its activities. Given the great strides made in the early life of the centre and the common sense of purpose, it is extremely well placed to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement but the centre is keen to extend its role as a multi-purpose facility for young children and their parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are exceptionally high. Children make very good progress in all areas of learning. Due to the excellent relationships that adults establish with them, together with the rich experiences provided, children's personal, social and emotional development grows rapidly. Their awareness of themselves as learners, their self confidence, creativity and problem-solving skills are very high. This provides a very secure basis for work across all areas of learning. Children's early skills in speaking and listening move on apace because adults take every opportunity to talk to them and encourage children to interact with one another. Children make a very good start in developing early notions of shape and number by, for example, playing with large construction apparatus and sorting activities, and singing counting songs. Their knowledge of the world outside their immediate experience is extended

very effectively through stories and activities such as planting seeds and nurturing plants. Because creative and physical activities abound, children see these as a natural part of their day. As a result, they make great strides in these areas.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. Increasingly, children negotiate and solve problems without adult support. Through the judicious use of encouragement and praise, levels of self-esteem are high. One parent commented, 'My child's development and social skills have improved enormously.' Children are developing an excellent understanding of healthy eating relative to their ages. They take full advantage of all the physical activities on offer, including the extensive range of indoor and outdoor apparatus. Children take on tasks willingly and routinely support new or less confident children.

Overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are relaxed and positive, and behave appropriately in different contexts. This occurs, for example, when a whole group is expected to listen to an adult or when they are not immediately supervised. Children's spiritual development is very good, as evident in the respect and concern they show for themselves and others. They are developing exceptionally strong moral values. This was evident during a discussion prompted by a story about how conflicts with friends could be resolved. Adults celebrate children's cultural backgrounds and this helps children to develop a good sense of cultural diversity in relation to their ages. Children's high levels of independence and enthusiasm for learning prepare them extremely well for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. The centre's provision is rooted in the view that young children should be partners in their own learning. All adults work from this premise and engage children in thinking about their learning at every opportunity. A major strength is the teamwork between teachers and support staff in creating an environment rich in practical experiences. Adults are extremely good at engaging children in discussing what they are doing and moving their learning forward. Excellent relationships underpin learning and adults are skilled in helping children to articulate their thoughts and express their ideas. As a result, children are developing relatively mature insights into what, how and why they are learning. During discussions in small groups with their 'key workers' children develop skills in reviewing how well they are getting on and in planning, with adult support, what they do next.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. Staff are very familiar with the Foundation Stage curriculum, using it as a framework within which they incorporate children's individual learning needs. Adult-initiated activities are meticulously planned to provide an excellent level of challenge for all children. During a carefully devised session using indoor apparatus, children, including one with physical disabilities, were confident enough try out new things, drawing on the sensitive support of adults. Daily routines also include activities which children plan themselves and later evaluate. This 'plan, do, review' approach provides excellent opportunities for children to reflect

on their own learning and achievement. The learning areas indoors and out, are set up with highly stimulating activities chosen to engage children's interests, including a range of books, models and dressing-up clothes reflecting a range of different cultures. Children's independence is promoted successfully as they carefully select, use and return resources. Parents are kept well informed about on-going curriculum activities so they can support their children at home. Parents often make a direct contribution to the curriculum, for example, in sharing with children their cultural customs and traditions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Children thrive in this safe, bright and happy environment. All staff have a thorough knowledge of the circumstances and needs of each child, and a strong commitment to supporting them and their families. Consequently, the centre meets the needs of individual children extremely well. When necessary, the school brings in a comprehensive range of help. A parent commented, 'My son's speech problems were noticed very quickly and he was referred to speech therapy almost at once.' Staff point children to their next steps of learning with great skill, by ensuring that the guidance is highly challenging but achievable. Children themselves are encouraged to think problems through both individually and with their peers and then to make any necessary changes. Procedures to keep children safe and to check the suitability of all adults working in the centre are excellent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. She has developed the centre so that it is a place of excellence and a flagship for the local authority. She is held in very high regard by all staff and her vision is embraced, cherished and practised by all. She has empowered staff at all levels to play an active role in all areas of the centre's work. The impact of senior leaders is highly effective in all areas of the centre's work, including teaching and learning, and children's achievements and personal development. Staff at all levels work together excellently. They are highly supportive of each other and continuously seek to innovate and further improve practice. The centre's self-evaluation is first class. It recognises that, as a newly established centre, it does not yet fully meet the local authority's mission to provide all children's services under one roof.

Governors, many of whom are recently appointed, have a very good understanding of the centre's strengths as well as areas for further development. They are increasingly involved in checking on the its performance and ensuring that resources are used efficiently.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of The Ambleside Centre, Woodley, RG5 4JJ

Thank you so much for welcoming us yesterday. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found out. The Meadows is a fantastic nursery and one you can all be very proud of.

Here are some of the things we liked.

- You really enjoy school and all the wonderful activities offered.
- You love learning new things and are very good at sharing, taking turns, talking and being kind to one another.
- The teaching is brilliant which is why you learn so much and make excellent progress.
- Your behaviour is super and you get on very well with one another.
- All the adults know you very well and you receive excellent care and support from them.
- The headteacher is terrific and wants the very best for all of you.
- Your parents are very pleased with the school.

We agree that the centre could have even more people based there to help children and their families.

We wish you all the best for the future.

With kind regards,

Rob Crompton

Lead Inspector