

Norcot Early Years Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109751
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	310083
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Aileen King

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	0–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Viki Lloyd
Headteacher	Miss Diana Heath
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2005
School address	82 Lyndhurst Road Tilehurst Reading RG30 6UB
Telephone number	01189 015 577
Fax number	01189 015 679

Age group	0–5
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Norcot Early Years Centre provides for 226 children in total, with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision offered for children from birth to five years. There is after school care for children up to eight years. Children come from a range of socio-economic circumstances and there is significant cultural diversity in the children's backgrounds. There are ten children learning English as an additional language. Twenty-five children are currently identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and a few children have statements for complex needs. There are various partnerships and links with outside agencies and organisations from the local community and abroad.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Norcot is an outstanding Early Years Centre. From starting points which are below what is normally expected for their age children make exceptional progress in all areas of learning. This is because of the excellent provision for the children's development and welfare. By the time the children leave the Centre the majority have exceeded the levels expected for their age. The Centre's highly inclusive ethos is key to the way children thrive and develop in their learning.

Parents are extremely supportive of the Centre and how their children are cared for. The Centre ensures that there are opportunities for all members of the community to be involved in a very wide range of activities and networks. Parents and carers take advantage of the variety of workshops and activities such as 'Sat Dad's' club, held on a Saturday morning. Their comments reflect the outstanding provision: 'Norcot is a fantastic Centre', and, 'I would not send my child anywhere else'.

The outstanding quality of the leadership and management is the driving force behind the Centre's success. The head of centre provides inspired guidance with an innovative approach to developing children's learning, self-esteem, and confidence in their abilities. Extremely high expectations are mirrored by the quality of interaction staff have with the children. Staff are highly committed and the head of centre's management is key to this as the team is large, demanding considerable organisational expertise. Staff strive very successfully to meet the different needs of the children and help them, in partnership with their parents, to succeed and achieve their best. Policies, procedures and routines are all very well established and are reviewed very regularly. As a result, the Centre has a very clear view of what works successfully, is highly proactive and has excellent capacity to improve.

The impact on the children's achievement and progress is significant, as their developmental needs are met very well, with an interesting and innovative range of activities and resources. Children have challenging, engaging and creative experiences, such as on the 'Learning through Nature' visits, when children explore and learn outdoors, or when working at the head of centre's computer. All these combine to provide a wealth of experiences, which benefit the children's future. Resources are of a very high quality and, combined with the outdoor area and its use, make learning exciting, fun and enjoyable. The children, including the very young, are confident users of information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning. Children's learning and development are very well supported by staff who provide a very good balance of increasingly challenging tasks. These help the children achieve, as do activities which the children can initiate for themselves. The lively and very welcoming atmosphere helps to inspire and motivate the children. The way in which children's achievements is assessed to build on future learning is good. The Centre has rightly identified the need to refine assessment further to bring it more in line with the EYFS curriculum and the staff have already devised a plan to address this. Day care for the very youngest children and babies is of very high quality and the range of activities are carefully matched to the children's needs, ages and interests.

The excellent arrangements for promoting the children's personal development and welfare means that they are happy and settled. Procedures for keeping the children safe are in place and the excellent relationships within the Centre at all levels mean the children feel comfortable and included in the setting. Behaviour is excellent and the children have high levels of respect for each other and adults. They know how to assert themselves and put across their ideas in a positive way. There is a wide range of partnerships. In particular, the parental partnership is

regarded as of paramount importance and the Centre goes the 'extra mile' to maintain this. Parents generally feel very well informed about what their children are doing, what they have achieved and the next steps in their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine assessment procedures to ensure that they reflect all the EYFS curriculum requirements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children come into the Centre with skills that are below those normally expected for their age. In particular, their skills in communication, language and literacy are well below those expected of children of the EYFS age group. However, children of all backgrounds and abilities make outstanding progress, because of the high quality of the provision. Children who are learning English as an additional language make exceptional rates of progress because of the support they receive towards developing skills in communicating. This is due to the excellent way staff interact with the children, helping them to make suggestions and share their ideas. Children respond excitedly to the range of activities offered to them, they are curious, inquisitive and keen to learn. They thoroughly enjoy problem-solving, exploring and participating in outdoor activities. This means their personal, social and emotional development, alongside their skills in physical pursuits and being creative, are progressing extremely well. Their knowledge and understanding of the world around them are very impressive. They know that changes can occur in ingredients and materials, for example, from their experiences of making pumpkin soup and producing charcoal for drawing and artwork.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The Centre is a very lively, stimulating environment where children thoroughly enjoy learning and are eager to attend. Parents agree as their comments illustrate: 'It is a wonderful start to education' and, 'Norcot is a school I could recommend'. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They learn about other cultures very well through celebrating festivals and through art, music and storytelling. They are very aware of leading healthy lifestyles as seen in their preparation of nutritious food and the exercise they take through the 'Learning through Nature' programme. Children who attend the after school club can enjoy a varied menu. Behaviour is extremely good, demonstrated by the care and consideration they show for each other, and children are very willing to share and take turns in activities. Children are confident and take responsibility readily and show through their relationships with each other a very strong sense of community. They acquire skills which will be useful to them in the future, through the use of technology, in role play and from visitors who talk about their work, such as a recent visit by the town mayor.

Quality of provision

Effectiveness in promoting children's learning and development

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress, staff observe what the children are learning and use this information wisely to plan for the next challenging steps in their development. The team of staff in the Centre share what they observe to inform what children will learn based on what

the children already know and can do. There are plans to refine these assessments to bring them fully in line with the EYFS curriculum. The staff plan activities to support the children's acquisition of skills and the outdoor areas are put to very good use to this end. There is a highly integrated and innovative approach, which enhances learning, and using the outdoors helps the children become healthy, active and energetic learners. Children are eager participants in the learning process, including those children identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities and those learning English as an additional language. Opportunities are used very well to ensure the children experience the full range of activities, that these are suitable for their level of ability, and that they enjoy a high degree of success to build their confidence and self-esteem. These opportunities are enriched further, for example, by visitors to the setting. A piper fascinated and inspired the children to join in the performance and led to creating patterns based on his kilt design.

Effectiveness in promoting children's welfare

Grade: 1

Children's welfare is taken extremely seriously and is at the heart of the Centre's work. Procedures regarding care are firmly in place to ensure children are kept safe and free from harm, with very effective records to keep everyone informed. All staff are qualified as paediatric first aiders and qualifications are regularly reviewed. The layout of the buildings has been very carefully considered to allow easy access for children within their rooms and to the very secure outdoor areas. Very good routines and strict procedures have been put in place for the arrival and collection of children from the Centre. Children are taught to keep themselves safe, for example, by handling tools and implements correctly for food preparation and when sawing wood outdoors. The exceptional outside environment enables children to be adventurous while under vigilant adult supervision. The excellent partnership with parents and carers, and arrangements to provide a healthy start to the day at breakfast club, mean the Centre is well placed to encourage regular attendance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Parents' comments accurately sum up the way the Centre is led and managed. One stated, for instance, that there is 'A perfect transition from day care to nursery', while another said that 'Learning through Nature is superb'. The highly skilled head of centre offers inspired leadership, with a thoroughly innovative approach. She ensures the children thrive and prosper in their imaginatively presented learning environment. The expectations for what the children will achieve are exceptionally high and there is a shared vision and drive to ensure this happens, based on very accurate self-evaluation. Because of this, there is a significant impact on the children's achievement and the outcomes for their learning and development. The very large staff team is fully committed to the work of the Centre and the needs of the children, and with senior management, very ably support the head of centre. There is a strategic approach to management which is highly effective, given the size and rather complex nature of the Centre and the range of facilities offered. The governing body is proactive and consists of representatives who have a very wide range of skills, experiences and backgrounds to reflect the diversity of the local area. This is used to make Norcot the hub of the community, to develop a feeling of belonging and cohesiveness and ensure excellent value for money. The highly inclusive ethos at Norcot is a strong feature of the Centre's work. The quality of day care and

extended care in the breakfast and after school clubs is excellent. The Centre uses wide-ranging links and partnerships to full advantage to benefit the children's learning and development.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
The standards[1] reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Norcot Early Years Centre, Reading, RG30 6UB

Thank you for being so friendly when the inspectors visited you. We really enjoyed meeting you and sharing in some of your interesting activities. I particularly enjoyed seeing some of you at breakfast club. I noticed how much you liked the scrambled egg, toast and yogurt and that you know these are good for you. Going with some children on the 'Learning through Nature' walk was also great fun. We think that your Early Years Centre is excellent.

We were so pleased to hear the piper and that some children were so enthusiastic they joined in playing their own 'bagpipes'. We both liked how you care for your pets. Eggy, Velma and Daphne are very lucky chickens.

These things are excellent:

- you really enjoy all the interesting activities
- you learn new things very quickly because the grown-ups help you so much
- you behave very well and share fairly and take turns
- you play very well in the outdoor areas to make you big and strong
- all the grown-ups help each other to look after you very well.

I have asked the grown-ups to think about:

- the way they note down all the interesting things you do to help you do even better.

Yours sincerely

Aileen King

Lead Inspector