

The PACE Centre

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	825/6031
Unique Reference Number	131462
URN for registered childcare	EY245819
Inspection number	330412
Inspection dates	1–2 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

The PACE centre provides for boys and girls aged 0-11 years who have physical disabilities and additional problems such as sensory, learning and communication difficulties. Almost all pupils have a statement of their special educational needs. The school bases its work on the philosophy, principles and practices of Conductive Education which integrates education, care and therapy into a unified approach. The school is staffed by a range of professionals including Conductive Education conductors, teachers, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and learning support staff. They work in collaborative, trans-disciplinary class teams. The school opened in 1997 and its early years and school provision were last inspected in January 2006.

There are currently 36 full-time and 25 part-time pupils on roll, including eight children under three years of age and 20 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Eleven children receive government nursery education funding. The main school is located in purpose-built premises in a residential area in Aylesbury. It also has additional classes and resources in two local maintained special schools. Three classes are based at Booker Park special school. Two of these are part-time classes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, one of which is for children on dual placement with mainstream school. One class is for pupils of all ages with particularly complex needs. PACE provides specialist input for a group of secondary-aged pupils on the roll of Heritage House special school, and PACE's parent-child group for 0-3 year olds is also based at this school.

PACE is an acronym for Positive Achievement through Conductive Education. The PACE centre aims to provide an 'education for life, through an integrated curriculum that addresses the needs of the whole child, thus developing their social, emotional, communication, cognitive, self-care and physical abilities'.

Evaluation of the school

The Pace Centre is an outstanding school that provides an excellent quality of education for all pupils, including those of Early Years Foundation Stage age. The school is successful in meeting its aims and those of Conductive Education. The integration of education, therapy and care ensures that pupils' complex needs are consistently addressed. They make outstanding progress in their academic, physical and communication skills, and in their personal development. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and for safeguarding their welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school has grown and developed since the last inspection, and suggestions for improvement have been effectively addressed. The Pace Centre met all regulations in 2006, and has again met all the regulations inspected in this light touch inspection.

Quality of education

The quality of education is outstanding. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent commented 'one of the best things about PACE is that despite the children's disabilities, staff have high expectations of them, and invariably, the children rise to the challenge. I also feel that we are properly supported in all aspects of our children's care'.

The school has developed an outstanding integrated curriculum that addresses pupils' complex needs and appeals to their interests very effectively. Physical development is considered to be a crucial learning matter at PACE. The pupils learn to control their movements so that they can lead a more independent life and learn more effectively. The educational content of the curriculum is taken from the National and Early Years Foundation Stage curricula, together with guidance developed for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Running alongside the academic curriculum are highly detailed programmes to support pupils' physical and communication skills. The curriculum is very carefully tailored to match individuals' needs because their skills and abilities vary widely. For example, mathematics planning for one group of six pupils included learning objectives taken from Year 1, Year 3 and Year 4 schemes of work to match pupils' different levels of attainment.

Appropriate emphasis is put on developing physical, communication, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. Support for pupils' personal, social and emotional development is a fundamental aspect of the school's work, and is reinforced at all times through the outstanding relationships and quality of care. Personal, social and health education is taught in many of the Conductive Education sessions, for example personal hygiene, eating and drinking skills. It is also taught through subjects such as science. For example, 'puberty' and 'combating stereotyping' have recently been topics in the Y5/6 class. Pupils are well prepared for the opportunities and experiences of adult life, because they are strongly supported and encouraged to become as independent as possible. Good use is made of the community to broaden pupils' experiences and to bring the curriculum alive. The school has outstanding partnerships with two other special schools and links are developing well with a local primary school.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. The lead professional in a lesson can be any one of the trans-disciplinary class team. Staff to pupil ratios are virtually one to one, and the success of all lessons is due to exemplary team work, careful planning, outstanding relationships, detailed knowledge of each pupil's particular needs and the commitment to facilitate each pupil's physical, communication and cognitive abilities. Staff have extremely high expectations of pupils to try hard, even under the most difficult of circumstances for them. They are extremely patient and respectful, and wait for pupils to process information and act accordingly, which can take up to 30 seconds.

Pupils make outstanding progress. A variety of assessments is used to set targets in individual education plans. These include physical, communication and academic targets in all subjects. Progress is systematically tracked against these, supported by records of achievement, photographs, pupils' own written work and tests at the end of units of work, as appropriate. Staff assess pupils' levels of attainment annually and these are presented to parents as part of the annual review of their statements, along with detailed progress reports. However, reporting on educational attainment and progress is not always as detailed as reports on pupils' developing physical and communication skills. The school is appropriately considering a more uniform way of tracking and reporting very small steps of progress, and using the data collected on each individual to inform whole school self-evaluation. These developments are part of current wider-scale improvements of the school's planning, recording and target setting processes, many of which are already in place.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The development of self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence is a key element of the provision for pupils of all ages. Pupils develop complete trust in adults and are confident that their needs will be met and their voices will be heard. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils enjoy school very much and try their utmost to succeed. Their endeavours and determination can be seen on their faces in every lesson as they strive to achieve demanding physical and mental goals. Success is reinforced by rewards, house points and merits such as 'clever points'. Parents' pre-inspection questionnaire returns say unanimously that their children enjoy school. Attendance is exceptionally good considering the pupils' frailty, and there have been no incidents of unauthorised absence, exclusions, bullying or racial harassment in the past year.

Pupils are very well prepared for their future lives and for making a contribution to the community. Much of the school's work is conducted in groups, in which pupils learn to relate to one another and, where possible, to take the initiative. Relationships are outstanding. Pupils have empathy with one another and show each other consideration and real respect and friendship, for example, volunteering a friend to go first in a game. The school teaches citizenship in personal, social and health education and makes good use of the community to broaden pupils' experiences. Pupils learn about public services and 'people who help us', and have considerable first-hand experience in their contact with the many professionals who

support them. Pupils, in turn, support other members of the community by taking part in charitable activities such as the Children's Challenge. Pupils of all ages enjoy music and literature; books and artefacts throughout the school reflect a range of cultures. The school is a multi-cultural community and pupils are taught about religions and celebrate various religious festivals throughout the year. This supports their understanding of the local and wider communities very effectively.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school makes outstanding provision for the care, welfare, safety and well-being of its pupils. The staff are acutely aware of pupils' vulnerability; robust health and safety, child protection and safe recruitment practices safeguard pupils very effectively. All requirements are met. Relevant staff training, for example in fire safety and child protection, is up-to-date, included in new staff's induction and regularly repeated for all. Risk assessments are made of all activities and in relation to the manual handling of individuals. Pupils' dignity is preserved at all times.

The school makes outstanding provision for keeping pupils safe and healthy. Its work is focused on improving pupils' mobility so that they can lead more independent and enjoyable lives. Pupils are supported to eat and drink healthily, and they learn about healthy eating in various curricular subjects. Staff use the outside areas as much as possible. Those in the main building have just been re-designed to provide raised beds for gardening. Classrooms are kept cool and fresh which provides a healthier environment for the pupils. Staff have hand sanitizers with them at all times and use them throughout the day to minimise the risk of infection. There is a strong emphasis on teaching pupils to be physically safe, for example to use their hands to protect themselves if they fall. Pupils have complete trust in adults to safeguard them. On one occasion, for example, a pupil quietly manoeuvred herself to be close to an adult while she was practicing standing alone, so that she could be 'caught' if necessary.

The support for pupils' personal, social, emotional, communication and academic development is excellent. The school is meticulous in addressing the needs and requirements as specified on individuals' statements, and in developing more targets to support further progress. The school is completely accessible to the disabled, in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act. Its roll is growing, and additions and improvements to the building are always carefully considered to be fully accessible. Nevertheless, the school is currently revising its three year plan to improve access to its provision for pupils with additional difficulties.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for this age group is outstanding. Excellent leadership and management ensure that practice follows the high quality guidance, policies and procedures of the main school, while also fully incorporating the statutory learning, development and welfare requirements for the age group. Resources are very effectively deployed to meet the needs of individuals and the different groups, and adults strive successfully to provide the best possible care and education for the children. Stringent

arrangements are in place to assure that children are safe at all times. The children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. They have very positive attitudes towards learning and participate willingly, responding very well to the staff's high expectations. Many children show friendship, consideration and concern for one another and are happy, friendly and sociable little individuals.

The children enjoy school and benefit greatly from the experience. The curriculum takes its educational content from the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. It is taught in the same trans-disciplinary way as the main school's curriculum with particular emphasis on personal, social and emotional development, communication language and literacy and physical development. Choice and decision making are built into all lessons. Some opportunities are given for child-initiated exploration and play, although these are difficult for most children to achieve on their own. However, opportunities to reinforce curricular areas of learning through self-directed play are limited. Very good use is made of outdoors. Each class has its own outside area, resourced with suitable play and educational materials and equipment.

Children's achievement is outstanding. They are active learners, in keeping with the Conductive Education philosophy, and respond very well to physical and intellectual challenges. Children learn to communicate by various means such as speaking, pointing or eye pointing. They learn to control their movements, lift their heads, focus on items and use their hands. This helps them access other aspects of the curriculum. Assessment is based on observation and numerous professional assessments. These underpin detailed records of progress, although they are not externally moderated to assure reliability. Records show outstanding progress in the areas of prime importance, and some children are working at approximately age appropriate levels.

Although not operating at the moment as home visits are taking place, many of the children first experience Conductive Education and the work of the school in the parent-child group. This is highly valued by parents and prepares children very well for attending PACE or mainstream school part- or full-time once they are old enough. Close partnerships are established with parents, and these are continued right through the school. Parents are delighted to see their children settle quickly, enjoy school and make outstanding progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- as planned, implement a consistent way of tracking very small steps of academic progress
- report on educational attainment and achievement in more detail
- develop links to support the moderation of academic assessments
- provide further independent play opportunities that reinforce the curricular areas of learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	✓			
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?	✓			
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	✓			
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?	✓			

School details

Name of school	The PACE Centre		
DCSF number	825/6031		
Unique reference number	131462		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY245819		
Type of school	Independent special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	March 1997		
Age range of pupils	0–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 17	Girls: 19	Total: 36
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 15	Girls: 10	Total: 25
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 5	Girls: 3	Total: 8
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 29	Girls: 26	Total: 55
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,131 – £37,334 (pro rata)		
Address of school	Philip Green House Coventon Road Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP19 9JL		
Telephone number	01296 392739		
Fax number	01296 334836		
Email address	ThePace.Centre@virgin.net; amanda.richardson@thepacecentre.org		
Headteacher	Mrs Amanda Richardson		
Proprietor	The PACE Centre Registered Charity		
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth		
Dates of inspection	1–2 April 2009		