

The Ambleside Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109759
Local Authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	337368
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Susan Vale

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Moya Taylor
Headteacher	G Allen
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2010
School address	Ambleside Close Reading RG5 4JJ
Telephone number	0118 9690837
Fax number	0118540424
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Age group	3–5
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent most of the time looking at learning. They visited 13 lessons, and saw all teaching staff in both the Nursery and the childcare provision. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, leaders of the children's centre, and the headteacher. They looked at assessments of the progress of individuals and different groups of children, and records of the centre's own observations of lessons. They examined planning and other documentation, along with 76 questionnaires from parents and carers of children aged 3 to 5, and 55 questionnaires relating to children aged 0 to 3.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively children's progress and development are assessed and used to help move them on to the next steps in their learning
- the safeguarding procedures and checks to ensure the safety of the children
- the induction of new children.

Information about the school

The Ambleside Centre draws its children from a diverse range of cultural and social backgrounds. Children have a full range of capabilities on entry but, taken as a whole, they are somewhat below average. Around 17% of children are identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, of which the majority are related to hearing impairment and communication and language difficulties. Around 10% of children are new to learning English. Children attend at different times depending on their needs or parental requirements, as the centre runs a flexi-time system. At the time of the inspection over a quarter of the children were newly started.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

- The Ambleside Centre provides an outstanding start to children's education. Children achieve exceptionally well from the moment they arrive as babies in 'Pastures' and as they progress through 'Meadows'. The majority of children make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- There are excellent links with children's families. Parents are very positive in their comments about both the Nursery and the childcare provision.
- Children are exceptionally well prepared for the next steps in their learning through outstanding teaching and a vibrant, stimulating curriculum.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is exceptional. The provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with hearing impairment, is first rate. Children are superbly well behaved. Healthy lifestyles are adopted exceptionally well and children participate in ensuring that healthy fruit snacks are available throughout the day. Many enjoy the healthy lunch provided.
- The teaching is supported by excellent assessment procedures. This ensures that all children make more than expected progress in all aspects of their learning, including the development of new skills. Children are exceptionally well cared for and there is excellent guidance and support. The centre is highly inclusive and takes great pains to ensure that every child is fully involved in the activities.
- Leadership and management are excellent and drive forward all involved in the centre. The governing body supports the school extremely well and acts very positively as a critical friend. Community cohesion is good overall. There are outstanding links within the setting itself, but links with the wider community within Great Britain and beyond are not as strong, partly because they are not monitored sufficiently. This is an area which the centre intends to improve. The centre offers excellent value for money
- The centre's many strengths clearly demonstrate that it has outstanding capacity to sustain the excellent rate of improvement evident since its last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Monitor more fully the impact of the centre's work in promoting community cohesion beyond the centre itself.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

All children make at least good progress, and the majority make outstanding progress,

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in all aspects of their learning, so that attainment is above average by the time they leave. Children are actively encouraged to become confident, independent learners right from their first experiences at the centre. Lunch for the youngest children is an active social event. Children as young as 14 months are able to serve and feed themselves their food, and are willing to try out new tastes and experiences. This is exceptional development for children of this age. Equally, older ones are encouraged on a daily basis to learn how to solve problems and experiment with new learning activities. This was seen in the Nursery when two boys on a double bike were trying to transport a parcel. Together they worked out a solution to the problem, communicating their ideas clearly to each other and to adults. This independence of thought and problem solving is a major reason why children make such outstanding progress in their learning and why they achieve so highly. Behaviour is exemplary and all children are really keen to learn. In any part of the centre at any time children are thoroughly engaged and highly motivated active participants who are genuinely enthralled by some of their activities. For example, this was seen when two girls were leading a singing session for eight other children. They were really confident in what they were doing, resulting in a family atmosphere of cooperation and enjoyment. Consequently, the spiritual, moral and social aspects of the children's development are outstanding. The children are actively encouraged to make decisions for themselves about what they want to play with, which enhances the progress that they make. Increasing numbers of children start at the Nursery with skills, particularly in speaking and language, which are below what is expected for their age. These children, together with those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who are new to learning English, make the same outstanding progress as their peers. During the inspection around a quarter of the children had only been in the Nursery for about a week. Exciting activities with excellent adult interventions, as and when needed, meant that these children were already completely settled and enjoying all that was on offer.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment ¹	2
The quality of children's learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which children feel safe	1
Children's behaviour	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Children's attendance ¹	1
	2
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

All adults work with the children extremely well, and have well-established routines that help the children settle in really quickly. The calm, purposeful caring atmosphere, along with the stimulating curriculum and varied and exciting activities on offer, ensure that children settle rapidly into their new environment. Adults' interaction with children is excellent. They take on the role of initiator and willingly join in role play within children's own imaginative games. An excellent example of this was seen in the younger children's room where two-year-olds were dressing up as dragons in order to travel to the moon and adults joined in the role play with them. This really enhanced the children's learning. Teachers are experienced and skilled in providing challenges for children of different levels of capability. The increasing numbers who are new to learning English are exceptionally well catered for. The totally inclusive environment, and the exciting resources and activities on offer, ensure that there are a number of activities which interest and thoroughly engage all children, including the hearing impaired, in their learning. As one mother of a child with specific learning difficulties commented, 'We are so lucky here, as not only do they listen to the children but they take into consideration the wishes of the parents as well.' Assessment of children's knowledge, skills and understanding is excellent. Regular observations and discussions about individual children's interests and needs ensure that planning and the next steps for learning are fully integrated and embedded into the curriculum.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership and management of the centre inspire a united team who have a strong sense of purpose in helping all children to achieve to the best of their abilities. The headteacher's successful drive and ambition to support children in developing as confident, competent, independent learners are central to all that the centre sets out to achieve. Governors are fully supportive and fulfil their statutory duties well. They are not complacent and ensure that the centre continues to develop and support the families that it serves. Safeguarding procedures are fully adhered to and are robust, and staff are very vigilant to ensure children's safety. There are excellent links with a variety of other agencies supporting children and their families. The outstanding relationship between home and school begins when the staff first visit children's homes before they start to attend the centre. Community cohesion is good. While there are excellent links within the centre itself, and transition between rooms is extremely well prepared for and highly thought of by parents, the centre has identified the monitoring and development of links further afield as an area they wish to expand. The centre has a strong and effective commitment to ensuring that all children have equal opportunity to thrive and that there is no discrimination. It uses its considerable knowledge of each child's individual needs and interests extremely well to secure this. The childcare for children up to three years of age complies with registration requirements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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Views of parents and carers

Most parents are very happy with what the centre provides and the education their children receive. Many positive comments were written praising every aspect of the centre. One typical comment from a parent was, 'It is an amazing school and centre. It provides so well for my child whilst always seeing him as an individual with his own needs and ambitions.' A small minority of parents felt that communication between home and the centre was not as forthcoming as they would like. The inspection team looked into this very closely and felt that the centre does a number of things to ensure good communication, including home diaries for the younger children. Learning journeys are readily available for parents to look at for the older ones. Meetings are regularly held for parents to discuss their children's individual progress and achievement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at The Ambleside Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 76 aged 3-5 and 18 from 0-3 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 156, 3-5 year olds and 55, 0-3 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	70	27	29	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	71	76	22	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	64	68	28	30	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	57	33	35	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	65	31	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	61	33	35	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	54	41	44	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	49	52	34	36	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	60	34	36	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	59	32	34	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	55	35	37	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	61	65	27	29	3	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	72	24	26	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its children. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 April 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of The Ambleside Centre, Wokingham RG5 4JJ

Thank you so much for allowing us to visit your children's centre. It is a lovely place to be. We really liked the activities we saw you do. It was fun seeing all the different things that you have to play with. Some of the activities you do are very exciting and we wanted to join in lots of them. We loved the glitter in the tea leaves and playing outside!

You are very fortunate as you all go to an outstanding centre.

- You all make at least good progress and over half of you make outstanding progress from when you first start at the centre.
- There are outstanding links between the 'Pastures' and 'Meadows' parts of the centre, but we have asked the staff to improve the links with people outside the school.
- You learn such a lot and are extremely well prepared for the next steps in your learning.
- Teaching is excellent and really supports you in helping you to develop your skills, knowledge and understanding of the world around you.
- There is an outstanding, stimulating curriculum for you all to follow.
- All of you behave extremely well especially those of you who stay for lunch.
- You are cared for exceptionally well and there is excellent guidance and support.
- The centre is excellent at making sure everybody gets a lot out of their time there.

I hope that you continue to enjoy the fun things that there are to do and that you keep making such outstanding progress in your learning.

Yours sincerely

Sue Vale

Lead inspector

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