

Inspection of an outstanding school: Norcot Early Years Centre

82 Lyndhurst Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG30 6UB

Inspection date:

14 May 2024

Outcome

Norcot Early Years Centre continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children here flourish due to the care and attention of staff who understand their individual needs. A warm and nurturing environment is evident throughout the provision. This helps children to feel safe and secure. Parents comment on the strong support the school gives to children and the time staff take to form positive relationships with families. The school is rightly proud of its highly inclusive provision. Every child is welcome here and well supported to be ready for the next stage of their education.

The school teaches children the clear routines of school life. Children understand the expectations and are proud to meet these. They happily come into the school and calmly follow the well-established daily pattern of routines. Children thoroughly enjoy the group time sessions in the morning and afternoon. They relish the chance to share what they know and are eager to learn with their friends.

Throughout the nursery, children achieve strongly across the different areas of learning. There are exceptionally high aspirations for children to achieve their absolute best. Staff expertly help children to reach these.

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

All areas of the curriculum are emphasised and promoted effectively. The school has created a well-defined curriculum which identifies what children must know, do and remember. This curriculum reflects the school's high ambition for children. Staff understand how to tailor learning to meet children's needs precisely. Within the provision, staff take every possible opportunity to deepen children's thinking. Staff also use questioning proficiently to help develop children's understanding of key concepts and to check what they know. This is seen during structured group time sessions as well as when children are playing independently. For example, when children were excitedly finding snails outdoors, their mathematical knowledge was deepened by staff talking about

biggest and smallest. As a result of their high-quality learning experiences, children are very well prepared for their future education.

Inclusion is at the heart of the school's work. Within the two specially resourced provision classes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), children are supported extremely well to achieve the identified intended outcomes of the curriculum. Staff have a robust understanding of the individual needs of children with SEND and adapt their approach expertly to ensure that these children achieve their targets. Children with SEND are particularly well supported to access all areas of the school. Effective and well-chosen resources, including visual cards and choice boards, help to develop children's communication skills. Staff identify gaps in children's knowledge and ensure that additional activities are planned to provide additional practice in these areas. Staff are highly skilled at adapting tasks 'in the moment' in response to their ongoing checks on children's learning. They build on children's responses and reinforce key vocabulary. Children are immersed in language and literature throughout the school. They love listening to stories and reciting rhymes. Each half term, children focus on a different book in detail. Staff use the same structure to help children to recall the text. They recite it with enthusiasm, using signs and symbols to aid their understanding.

The personal, social and emotional development curriculum is woven through all the school does. It centres around ensuring that children understand the fundamental routines for school life and how to behave within the setting. This includes sharing equipment, taking turns and forming friendships. There is a sharp focus on building children's independence. At lunchtime, children understand and follow the well-rehearsed routines for eating lunch with their peers. Staff are excellent role models. They continuously demonstrate the school's high expectations and build positive relationships with the children. Adults intervene expertly to resolve conflict effectively. This helps children to build the skills of empathy and consideration of others. The behaviour policy is consistently followed throughout the school. All staff follow the same routines to ensure that children understand the rules and routines.

The school has prioritised children's wider development. There is a clear and convincing desire to provide opportunities for children to broaden their horizons through the curriculum and beyond. The school identifies many ways for children to experience different cultures and religions through their time at nursery. They celebrate different festivals and visit places of worship. The forest school provides children with the opportunity to be further immersed in nature and learn in a different way. Talents and interests are nurtured throughout the provision. Children are guided expertly to different areas of the provision, and have their own interests built on.

Staff are supported very well in their work. Leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of staff workload and seek opportunities to manage this while maintaining the highest quality of education. There is an extensive professional development offer for staff. This helps them to feel valued and further contributes to the strong sense of belonging and inclusion within the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 October 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 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

Unique reference number	109751
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10321759
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs of governing body	Chris Armstrong-Stacey Jennifer Watson Jones
Headteacher	Katarina Bingham
Website	www.norcotearlyyearscentre.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions for pupils with SEND. Each provision has 20 part-time places. One provision caters for children with social communication difficulties. The other provision caters for children who have a range of different learning needs.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, centre development manager, curriculum leader and inclusion leader.

- Inspectors met with three governors, including the two co-chairs of governors, and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and mathematics. Within the deep dives, inspectors talked to leaders about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited classrooms and outdoor learning environments, spoke to staff, spoke to some children about their learning and observed children learning, playing and interacting with staff.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders and staff about children's learning in other areas of the early years foundation stage.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record, reviewed safeguarding records and spoke to leaders, staff and governors. The inspector considered how well the school manages safer recruitment, and how it manages allegations about adults.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school development plan.
- Inspectors reviewed the 16 responses to the parent survey, including the seven free-text comments. An inspector spoke to parents on the morning of the inspection.

Inspection team

Sara Staggs, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Ellison

His Majesty's Inspector

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