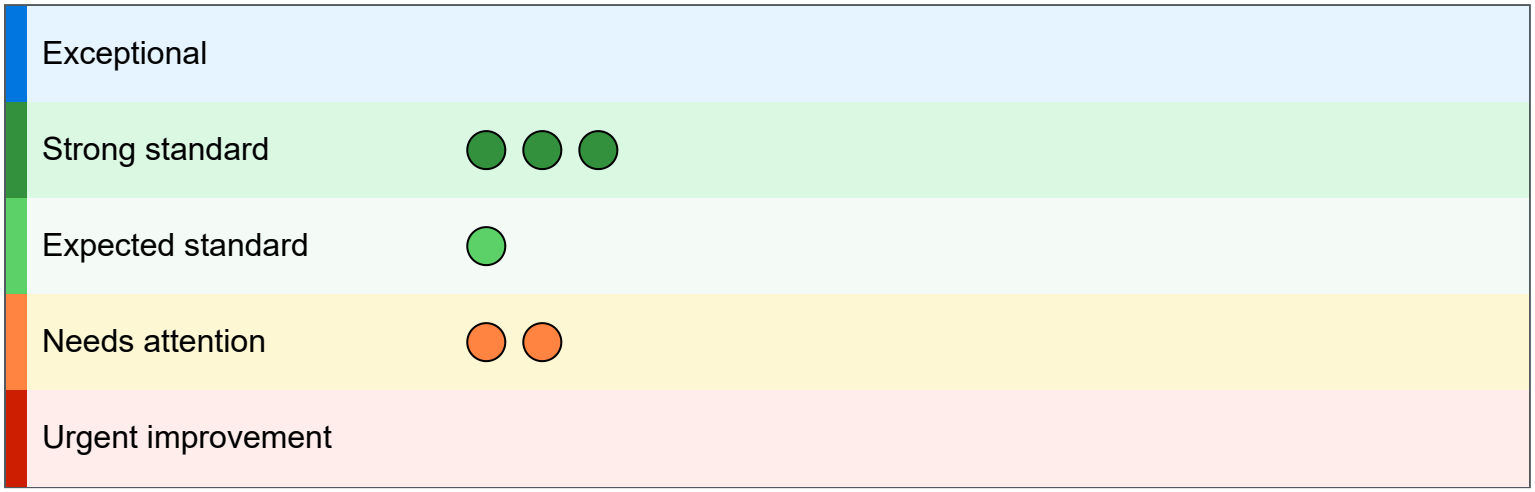
The Ambleside Centre

Address: Ambleside Close, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire, RG5 4JJ

Unique reference number (URN): 109759

Inspection report: 7 July 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard

The school’s curriculum and teaching ensures that children are well prepared and ready for moving onto the Reception Year. Children develop early reading, writing and mathematical skills securely. They recall their learning with growing confidence. Children use objects to count to 10 and often beyond. By time they leave nursery many children can use a number sentence accurately.

Children learn to confidently cut, stick and glue well. They increasingly develop their fine and gross motor skills, so they access independently the learning activities available to them. Children practise writing their name each morning. This helps them to be able to form letters with accuracy.

The nursery identifies children’s starting points through regular checks on learning. This helps staff understand what children know and what they need further support with. All children, including those who may need additional support, make progress from their starting points. As a result, all children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum that helps children learn more over time. They ensure the curriculum builds children's knowledge and skills very effectively. For example, children learn to skilfully select the right materials to construct exciting models independently. Staff know every child well. This enables them to ensure that individual needs are met and that any support needed is quickly identified. As a result, teaching is inclusive. All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, confidently access the provision and the activities provided. Leaders and staff ensure the provision supports all areas of learning and is deeply engaging for children. As a result, children gain confidence quickly and use the learning environment independently.

Staff know the importance of reading stories, singing and sharing rhymes with children. A rich tapestry of stories is shared every morning in group time. Children confidently retell and act out well known stories and demonstrate a love of books from an early age. They also learn to write their names with increasing accuracy and to count with ease in readiness for Reception class.

Staff are highly trained. As a result, well considered interactions with children support learning and development in all areas of the curriculum. Staff build children’s communication and language well. Children talk confidently about what they know, they can also effectively use their knowledge of counting to 10 to create number sentences.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Personal development and wellbeing are woven throughout the school’s work and curriculum. Children’s personal, social and emotional development is well considered. As a

result, children develop secure routines and growing independence. Staff make the most of everyday learning opportunities to help children understand the importance of keeping themselves safe. At lunchtime, children know that they should sit calmly while eating, demonstrating an understanding of behaviours that support their safety and wellbeing. Children have an age-appropriate awareness of how to stay safe in the sun. They understand the importance of waiting for adults to apply sun cream before going outside, as well as finding their own hat to wear.

Pastoral support is thoughtful and responsive. Staff know children and their families well. Children benefit from a wide range of experiences that help them develop confidence, independence and emotional wellbeing. They learn to name and manage their feelings. As a result, children can identify if they feel cross, sad or scared and know an adult will help them with their emotions if needed. Children also learn to assert themselves, by telling others, 'stop, I don't like it' if they need to. Children genuinely love playing with their friends and greet them excitedly every morning. All children say they feel safe.

Through high quality interactions and group times children learn to make independent choices, manage risks safely and take responsibility for their actions. Additional support helps children with special educational needs and/or disabilities participate fully. Family involvement is paramount to children's success at nursery. Initiatives like the reading café, family picnics or the Christmas fair with a difference, help parents and carers feel part of their child's journey at nursery school. All children participate in local area walks and exciting workshops to inspire their future interests.

Expected standard

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders' inclusive vision is that every child receives the support they need to access the school's learning environment successfully. Staff welcome all children and value them as individuals. Keyworkers gather detailed information from parents and carers before children start school. They use this information to enable children to settle quickly into the provision. Many children transition from Pastures (the settings under three's provision), enabling staff to build an initial understanding of their development over time. Positive relationships with parents are developed through daily interactions and termly parents' evenings. This is important because parents play a key role in contributing to the school's special educational needs and/or disabilities identification processes.

Leaders ensure that staff access a wide range of relevant training, such as autism awareness and programmes that develop speech and language acquisition. This further equips staff with the knowledge and confidence needed to identify children's additional needs and adapt support effectively. Because of this tailored approach, children flourish.

Leaders make effective use of extra funding to support disadvantaged children, such as with help to develop emotional regulation and wellbeing. This enables children to develop their communication skills, manage their emotions and learn well. Leaders work alongside external agencies such as the virtual school to support vulnerable children to thrive.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention

Leaders have only recently started to take action to improve attendance so it is too early to see the impact of this work. Strategic oversight of attendance is still in its infancy. Attendance oversight currently lacks rigour and analysis. This means that leaders do not check for patterns in poor attendance. As a result, they do not know if there are any ways individual or group attendance could be improved more quickly. Children, however, do love coming to school. Leaders work with families if there are any concerns with attendance, this work is relatively new and needs to be strengthened so all children are supported to attend when barriers are identified.

Behaviour is excellent. Children demonstrate warm and respectful relationships with their friends and adults alike. They share and support each other well throughout the nursery. Lunchtimes are harmonious occasions where children eat and talk politely with their keyworkers. Because activities are so engaging, children demonstrate a high level of focus and concentration when carrying out a task. Children take turns and share resources well with each other. If a child needs additional support, well-trained adults provide effective regulation strategies for them to be successful. Children demonstrate a high level of personal resilience when carrying out a task.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

Many governors are new to their roles. While they know and understand their roles, they do not challenge leaders effectively enough. Because of this, they cannot fully assure themselves of the impact of leader's work. Leaders provide a high quality of education for the children in the school. There is more work to do, however, to secure strategic development and embed greater oversight of the systems in place.

Leaders always act in the best interests of children and their families. They ensure that the school is at the heart of the community. As a result, parents and carers are effusive in their praise of the school and the care their child receives. Parents value the support their children receive before joining the nursery and when moving onto Reception.

Staff love working at the school and are proud of the work that they do. Many have been in post for a number of years and refer to the happy family feel of the school. Staff value the work leaders do to ensure that their wellbeing and workload is appropriate. Staff value the professional development and training that they receive. Leaders are proud of the way staff support each other to review and refine their own classroom practice. They ensure that training is in place to enable staff to support children effectively. The impact of this training is seen across the school in the relationships, confidence and independence that develops.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Children jump with joy every morning when they see their friends. They build special relationships and have a genuine love and warmth for each other. Children arrive each morning excited for the day ahead, confidently leaving their parents and getting straight on with their morning tasks. Staff know children well and help them to feel safe and settled. Warm relationships between children and staff are seen everywhere and help create a genuine family feel to the school. Parents are genuinely effusive in their praise for the care and education their children receive.

Children behave kindly towards one another. Lunchtimes are harmonious occasions where children learn to eat safely and share a meal with their friends and keyworkers. Relationships are a notable strength. Children say they love everything about their school and that they feel safe. They are taught to be resilient in the face of difficulties and to keep trying. Children focus on their chosen activity for increasing lengths of time. They demonstrate determination when faced with new and interesting challenges.

Although children are non-statutory school age, there is work to do for leaders to analyse attendance, reduce barriers and promote good attendance consistently.

Children make good progress from their starting points. Staff provide effective support that helps to reduce children's barriers to learning or to accessing other aspects of school life. Children make secure progress across the early years curriculum. They show curiosity, independence and sustained involvement in their learning. As a result, they are ready for their next steps of education.

Children sing rhymes, play in the water and swing on the climbing bars happily. They talk about their learning and love the stories they are told. Staff ensure that children’s physical development needs are met well.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed and develop their systems for tracking attendance, so attendance improves and so that they can evaluate the impact of their work.
- Governors need challenge school leaders effectively, to assure themselves of the quality and impact of the school’s work.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Rebekah Hodgson.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty’s Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. They also met with members of the governing body, as well as representatives from the local authority and the virtual school.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school also operates a provision for 0 to 2 year olds called Pastures. This is inspected under a different remit.

The school runs its own breakfast club and after-school club.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Kerrie Clifford

Lead inspector:
Simon Woodbridge, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Katie Hancock, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 7 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

107

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

0.0%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.80%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.35%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

HI - Hearing Impairment

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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