

Castle Vale Nursery School

Yatesbury Avenue, Castle Vale, Birmingham, B35 6DU

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Castle Vale Nursery is a special place to learn, where everyone is welcomed and valued. Children greatly enjoy all the stimulating and exciting activities. They become excellent learners and are very well prepared for school life.
- All groups of children, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make at least good, and often outstanding progress.
- Teaching is outstanding because staff know the children very well as individuals. Planning is based on a highly developed understanding of individual children's needs and interests.
- A rich curriculum interweaves many opportunities to develop children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural skills.
- Children thrive because of the strong focus on care and nurture. However, children do not always have enough opportunity to reflect on and talk about how they can improve their work.
- Children feel safe and well looked after, and show exemplary behaviour.
- Underpinning the school's continued success are the dedication and expertise of the headteacher. She provides inspirational leadership and is ably supported by senior staff and governors.
- Regular evaluations are made of teaching and children's achievement, and carefully thought-out actions are taken as needed. This has enabled the school to maintain its outstanding status for a third inspection.
- Governors challenge and support the school well, although parents and carers are not always aware of the contribution that governors make.
- Parents are highly supportive. One summed up their views by saying, 'We couldn't want for anything more in a nursery. Lots of attention, exciting things and helpful staff.'

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine sessions, or parts of sessions. Six observations were made jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of staff, three governors and two representatives from the local authority. A session of the lunchtime arrangements was seen, and opportunities were taken throughout the inspection to talk with the children.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) to gauge the views of parents. The inspector, therefore, took account of the results of the school's recent survey of parents and carers and spoke informally to parents as they brought their children to school.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including children's learning journals, teachers' planning, data on children's progress, development plans, monitoring records, records of meetings of the governing body, and documentation relating to welfare and safeguarding.
- Sixteen responses to the staff questionnaire were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Mary Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized nursery school. Most children attend morning or afternoon sessions, and some children attend on a full-time basis.
- The school supports an above-average proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs. They receive extra help, mainly to support their personal, social and emotional development and speech and language needs. There are no children with a statement of special educational needs.
- Most children attend nursery from the term after their third birthday until transferring to Reception classes in local schools. Some children spend five terms in the nursery. The school has just begun a new project to admit children before their third birthday.
- Most children are from White British backgrounds. A small number of children speak English as an additional language.
- The school shares the site with Castle Vale Children's Centre which is subject to a separate Ofsted inspection. The children's centre was last inspected in May 2012. The report is available on Ofsted's website, www.ofsted.gov.uk. Some staff are shared between both settings.
- The headteacher has a dual role and is also head of the children's centre. The headteacher joined the school in September 2012, and the deputy head started in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for children to reflect on and talk about how they can improve their work.
- Provide parents and carers with more information about the work governors do and their impact on helping the school improve.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is inspirational. She has a strong vision of what excellent early years practice should look like and has worked tirelessly to put this into place. She is ably supported by both her deputy, other leaders and leaders in the children's centre. Families bringing their children to the nursery school benefit enormously from the wider opportunities which the close links with the children's centre provide. Disadvantaged children and their families, particularly benefit from the seamless transition from attendance at the children's centre into life in the nursery.
- Leaders have an extremely accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They all work together to identify priorities and continually review how well things are working. The headteacher's consistently high profile in the nursery ensures that she is able to constantly check that her high expectations for children's learning are being met. This continual checking of all aspects of provision has been instrumental in the school retaining its outstanding status for the third time.
- The school employs a high proportion of qualified teachers to lead learning. A large number of other early years practitioners enable children to receive lots of individual attention. This high ratio of adults to children makes a significant contribution to the excellent progress that children make.
- Staff share the headteacher's vision of high-quality early years provision. Their expertise and close teamwork are a significant strength of the school. They constantly try to improve on what they already do. Every day, staff meet together to discuss and review the day. This means that changes can quickly be made to the following day's plans to better support children's learning.
- Robust systems are in place for school leaders to regularly check on the quality of teaching and children's progress.
- The management of teachers' performance and professional development are used to develop the positive team ethos through shared targets and developments while at the same time allowing individual skills to flourish. Salary progression is linked closely to teachers' performance.
- The curriculum is lively, vibrant and enhanced by excellent opportunities to undertake small trips, such as to local shops to buy ingredients for cake-making. Indoor and outdoor learning are equally valued. An excellent balance of activities and experiences is available across the day. The curriculum promotes moments of absolute wonder, for example, when finding worms in the mud-kitchen. The curriculum very successfully promotes children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children learn about festivals of other cultures, such as Chinese New Year, and about British institutions, such as the police, through visits. The curriculum effectively helps prepare children for life in modern Britain.
- Parents are very positive about the school and know their children thrive there. Parents speak about how well the staff helped their children settle into school. They greatly appreciate the home visits and the displaying of photos taken during these visits around the nursery to help their children feel secure and safe. Parents are extremely positive about the strong relationships the school forms with them. They are particularly appreciative of all the additional help given, particularly to disadvantaged children and families. 'The school helps the families as much as the children,' was one of many similar comments.
- The local authority regards the school as one which never stands still but seeks continual improvement. It is seen as highly effective and is regularly visited by other schools to share best practice. The headteacher is proactive within the local nursery headteachers' consortium. The local authority provides suitable 'light touch' support to this outstanding school.
- Safeguarding has a high priority in the nursery. Rigorous and effective policies and procedures ensure children's welfare and well-being are of high quality.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely committed to continuous improvement. They carry out their statutory duties fully. Governors know the school well. They talk knowledgeably about its work and understand clearly

the reasons why it is successful over time. They regularly review the work of the headteacher and staff and link pay to performance. They hold the school to account by asking challenging questions in meetings and committees. Governors scrutinise data and ask questions about children's achievement.

- Governors ensure that the curriculum positively prepares the children for life in modern Britain. They ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements. They do not always inform parents sufficiently about the work they actually undertake. This means that parents and carers do not always appreciate the value and impact of governors' work for the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of children is outstanding. Many children have only been attending the nursery for a very short time. They are being gently and kindly helped to learn what is expected of them and to behave as part of a community. Already, children are learning quickly and are beginning to take turns, share resources and help others. Returners to the nursery clearly understand what is expected of them and show excellent respect towards each other and all adults and visitors.
- Children's enjoyment of learning is evident throughout the day. They show high levels of enthusiasm in all activities. Practitioners and children share the joy of learning together and celebrate children's successes with enthusiasm. This enjoyment of learning lays the foundations for children to become lifelong learners.
- Transition into nursery and then into school is carefully planned and tailored to meet the needs of each individual child. This ensures that children settle quickly and feel secure. The excellent relationships throughout the nursery also make a significant contribution to children's high levels of confidence.
- The care and safeguarding of the children has the highest priority. Daily checks by staff ensure everyone is aware of any potential hazards. Parents have full confidence that the nursery will keep their children safe.
- Children develop an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They know to stop climbing when they reach the ribbon marker on the tree and how to take care when balancing and climbing. One child said, 'We know how to place the planks carefully when climbing so we don't slip off.' They understand the safety rules when handling the pet rabbit and why they need to wear goggles when hammering and sawing in the 'builders' workshop'.
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Children develop excellent spiritual awareness from collecting eggs from the hen coop and appreciating the natural world in forest school. They quickly learn right from wrong and accept each other's differences. Social awareness is excellent, shown in the way snack and lunch times are sociable occasions, with children helping to pour drinks and serving food.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because staff have high expectations and are relentless in ensuring that every child succeeds. All practitioners have an excellent understanding of how young children learn and the skills they need to acquire while in nursery. Staff know the children exceptionally well.
- Staff watch children closely and carefully note what they can do and what they are interested in. These notes are then used to plan a range of activities designed to interest children and help them learn more. Each day's activities are planned very precisely as they are adapted during the end-of-day review. Staff reflect and share children's interests and ideas so that they can make the most progress.
- Questioning is consistently strong because staff play alongside children and encourage them to talk through their thinking and develop their ideas. Staff encourage children to be inquisitive and to ask their own questions. Children are challenged to develop their own ideas. For example, a group of children who showed an interest in mini-beasts were encouraged to use books, pictures and technology resources to find out more about them. Children then extended their learning by hunting for mini-beasts, then recording what they had found through drawings and mark-making.

- A strength of the teaching is the significant time that staff provide for individual children, particularly for disadvantaged children or those who have additional needs. This enables staff to move children's learning on rapidly.
- Adults model language extremely well. They sensitively take every opportunity to introduce new vocabulary and encourage children to join in conversations.
- The nursery is full of exciting things for children to play with and experience. Some self-chosen play is excellent as shown by a group of children who used cardboard boxes as police cars and the home corner as the 'police cafe' as they engaged in imaginative role-play.
- The outdoor area has been carefully developed to provide lots of interesting opportunities for learning in a different way. The rabbit can be fed or petted, pies can be made in the mud kitchen and forest school further develops children's curiosity about living things. There is space to use the water hose to fill containers, balance and climb on cable spools or run around with friends.
- Staff are highly skilled in following up spontaneous opportunities to develop learning. For example, when an egg was found in the hen coop, children cracked it open to discover what was inside. Following a discussion, the children decided that they would cook and eat pancakes the next day. Children had great fun and early mathematical skills were cleverly taught as spoonfuls of ingredients were counted out.
- The teaching of disabled children and those who have additional needs is exemplary. Staff have an excellent understanding of these children's barriers to learning and ensure that teaching is presented in small steps that are achievable.
- Children's learning journals reflect the range of activities they have experienced during their time in nursery, and the annotations reflect the progress they have made. These show the skills the children have mastered and the fun they have had in this special place.
- Although there are some opportunities for children to reflect on their learning and discuss what could be improved, not all practitioners do this regularly.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children enter the nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding much lower than those for most three-year-olds. Some aspects of personal, social and emotional development, and communication and language skills are particularly low. Children learn rapidly and, by the end of the Nursery Year, most children achieve the expectations for their age, and some children exceed this level. Staff have successfully sustained the outstanding achievement seen at the last inspection so that achievement has been outstanding over at least the last five years.
- After only a few weeks, children who joined the nursery in September are already making excellent progress in their personal skills. They are already selecting their own breakfast cereal, pouring out milk and washing up after themselves. They can put on aprons and their wet weather gear. Children are already used to daily routines and settle quickly at the beginning of a session.
- Tasks given to children are achievable, and praise is used sensitively to develop children's self-confidence resulting in high levels of well-being. Children are excited and willing to 'have a go' and try new experiences.
- Children make excellent progress in their early reading and writing skills. Some children can already sort objects beginning with the same initial sound, and many can identify isolated letter sounds in their names and other words. Children enjoy stories and books and readily share books with an adult or one another. They enjoy repetitive rhymes and singing. Children make marks with water, paint and foam. Some are able to draw letter shapes and write their name.

- Children enjoy counting, and some children already count accurately. They enjoy using a wide range of resources, such as fans and blocks to match numbers. They can record how many blocks are in a tower.
- Much thought has gone into developing children's language skills. Daily opportunities to work individually or in small groups listening to an adult or each other and discussing ideas contribute to children's rapid progress in developing their communication skills.
- All children make excellent progress in all aspects of their physical development. They use pallets and planks well to develop climbing and balancing skills, and show good coordination as they make mud cakes and decorate them.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs learn as well as other children do because their additional needs are identified very quickly. They are given well-targeted support and are fully involved in all activities. Staff support their learning, but do not take over, so that children quickly grow in confidence and self-esteem.
- Analysis of the progress of the very few children who speak English as an additional language shows that they make excellent progress in their learning. The regular use of Makaton signing in the Nursery by both children and staff and the use of photographs as prompts, help contribute to their excellent achievement.
- Analysis of the progress data of children shows that both boys and girls progress equally well. Children known to be eligible for free school meals make the same excellent progress as other children. More-able children are quickly identified and are given additional challenges to speed their progress. For example, in the last academic year a group of higher-ability children took part in a cake-making challenge. They successfully made a list of required ingredients, shopped for them, made the cakes and recorded what they had done.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- All children in this school are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The report sections above evaluate the school's quality.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103144
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	448082

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	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Ruth Miller
Headteacher	Sally Leese
Date of previous school inspection	28 May 2012
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