

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Thomas Centre Nursery School

Bell Barn Road, Lee Bank, Birmingham, West Midlands B15 2AF

Inspection dates:

14 February 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

A nurturing ethos permeates the nursery. Children are very well cared for. The relationships between staff and children are strong. Children listen to adults intently and follow instructions successfully. Staff encourage independence building and this is done well. Children show that they are caring, often helping their friends with things like doing up tricky coat zips.

The nursery has a good reputation with parents and carers. They are very happy to send their children here and foster strong relationships with staff. Parents are warmly welcomed into the nursery and kept informed about their children's progress.

Staff make sure that every child is seen as an individual. 'Celebrating me' boards acknowledge children's achievements. Parents are encouraged to contribute to these boards, which relate to a range of important achievements at home and school.

The learning environment is well thought through by leaders. It is inviting and engaging, with lots of opportunities for children to explore indoor and outdoor learning experiences. Children readily engage in meaningful play. Many children are bilingual or are at the early stages of learning the English language. Staff put a lot of effort into developing children's language and vocabulary, but this is not always successful.

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

Leaders have high expectations for the standards they want children to achieve by the time they leave the nursery. These are shared by staff who feel well supported by leaders. Staff teach children based on the end of early years expectations rather than the small steps in learning that build up to this point. Leaders have not identified the important knowledge and vocabulary that they want children to learn and when. Consequently, staff

do not have enough guidance to help them build up children's knowledge and skills over time. This results in gaps in children's learning.

Leaders have concentrated on developing the environment recently. Each area of learning is clearly defined, and children get involved in a wide range of learning experiences, including developing small muscles of the body through using a range of different fastenings, such as big bolts. Leaders ensure that children benefit from the outdoor learning environment. Children enjoy creating games playing with balls, making sounds with drums in the sand pit and painting expressively.

Children listen to stories and rhymes with enjoyment. Adults read daily to children and send story books home each week to foster a love of reading. Staff swiftly identify gaps in children's language and vocabulary through careful assessments. Staff encourage discussion and ask questions during lessons. However, this is not always as successful as intended because some staff lack the expertise to develop children's language effectively. As a result, some children do not acquire the breadth and depth of language and vocabulary as leaders intend.

Leaders organise the learning environment in a way to support children's social and emotional development well. Staff use a range of resources effectively, such as pictures on pegs, water bottles and the register to give children a sense of who they are. Children show that they are confident in the nursery and seek the reassurance of key workers if they need assistance. Children grow in independence and happily take on responsible jobs such as choosing to help sweep up after an art activity.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early on. Leaders have a strong knowledge of SEND practices. They put this knowledge to good use in ensuring that children receive good-quality support and have their needs met. Parents views are sought as part of detailed review processes. Leaders work closely with external professionals to secure the support that children need. The nursery's nurture provision is a strength and meets the needs of children with SEND effectively.

Children regularly work with a professional artist in residence. This work provides children with high-quality opportunities to communicate their thoughts and feelings through art. Children create work of a high standard during these sessions. Children also work with musicians from the Birmingham Conservatoire as part of a storytelling through music project. They learn about a range of different faiths and cultures.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training so that they know how to recognise signs that a child may not be safe. Staff are aware of risks that exist locally. Staff are vigilant, meaning that potential issues are spotted early. Staff act on, promptly, any concerns raised. Leaders make appropriate and timely referrals to other agencies to secure the help that pupils and families need. Appropriate checks are made on staff to

make sure they are suitable to work in school. Children learn about people who help them to stay safe in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not organised some aspects of the curriculum in a way that enables children to build on their knowledge successfully. This means that children do not achieve as well as they could in these areas of learning. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum sets out the important knowledge and vocabulary that children should learn and the order in which it needs to be taught.
- Some staff do not have enough expertise to ensure that all children who speak English as an additional language acquire a breadth and depth of vocabulary. Leaders need to make sure that all staff have the necessary expertise to successfully widen children's vocabulary.

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 December 2013.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 103124 |
| Local authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 10257041 |
| 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 | 114 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Sean Delaney |
| Headteacher | Stuart Brown |
| Website | www.stthomascentrenursery.sch.life |
| Date of previous inspection | 10 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- St Thomas Centre Nursery School is federated with eight other nursery schools maintained by the local authority.
- St Thomas Centre Nursery works closely with Lillian De Lissa Nursery and Newtown Nursery School in a small cluster. This cluster is served by a 'local committee' but remains accountable to the Birmingham Federation Governing Board.
- St Thomas Centre Nursery School had an interim headteacher in post at the time of the inspection.
- Children attend either on a full-time or part-time basis.
- The nursery school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- Before the inspection started, inspectors looked at the school's website and information about the nursery available online.

- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, day care manager and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and teachers to discuss and scrutinise documents linked to safeguarding, school improvement and curriculum planning. Governor reports were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors spoke to several parents.
- During the inspection, inspectors focused on communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; and expressive arts and design. Inspectors looked at children's work, held discussions with teachers and visited classrooms to see children learning.
- Inspectors looked at other areas of the curriculum in less depth, including mathematics.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- There were no responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Emma Titchener, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Martina Abbott

Ofsted Inspector

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