

Inspection of an outstanding school: Castle Vale Nursery School

Yatesbury Avenue, Castle Vale, Birmingham, West Midlands B35 6DU

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 November 2023

Outcome

Castle Vale Nursery School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Castle Vale Nursery is an exceptional, happy place, where children flourish. Every child gets the support they need to thrive. The school's vision, 'Making a difference. All of our children, all of the time', is threaded through the curriculum.

Leaders have high expectations of what children can achieve socially, emotionally and academically. Learning is active, magical and fun. Children have extensive opportunities to explore natural environments, including through forest school. They are not afraid to make mistakes and take risks. Staff know when to stand back and let children work things out for themselves, or when to offer support.

The school has established clear routines and teaches children how to behave well. As a result, the way children conduct themselves is exemplary. They learn and play collaboratively, showing care and consideration towards one another. They are safe and happy because caring staff pay close attention to their individual needs.

Staff identify and meet children's learning and development needs extremely well. This includes making adaptations for, and giving extra support to, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Children gain an extensive amount of knowledge across each area of learning. They are very well supported in the development of their skills.

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

The nursery is extremely well led by a dynamic leadership team. Leaders are ambitious for all children, wanting them to be as well prepared as possible for their next stage in education. They have designed a rich and exciting curriculum. The curriculum is carefully organised to ensure that children practise and embed each step of learning throughout the provision. The local authority uses the school as an example of strong practice in developing children's knowledge and skills.

Through home visits and initial observations, staff assess children's starting points thoroughly. Each child's key person plays a pivotal role in building a triangle of trust and support between the child, school and home. Key persons know their children incredibly well. They keep a close eye on children's development and keep in touch with parents and carers. Staff review learning together to ensure that the opportunities are continually adapted and enhanced to extend children's learning. As a result, all children make exceptional progress.

Leaders and staff have a sharp focus on developing children's communication and language skills. Staff are adept at modelling precise language to support children's vocabulary. Staff introduce new language to children skilfully. They practise new words regularly so that children know how to use these accurately. For example, children were outside making potions and were rehearsing vocabulary such as 'mix', 'stir', 'wet', 'dry' and 'dissolve'.

The learning environment is wonderful. Outdoors, for example, the children balance on the trim trail, climb trees and develop their body strength. Such activities allow children to learn from trial and error and to make gains in their social, personal and physical skills.

Similarly, indoors, children have opportunities to develop a range of skills. In mathematics, for example, children were developing an appreciation of number. They counted collections of objects and recorded the amount by tallying.

The school focuses on developing children's love and understanding of reading. For example, listening to stories plays a key part in helping children to love books. Staff read to the children with such enthusiasm. Staff's use of resources to help children's understanding of stories is exemplary.

The school's provision for children's personal development is impressive. There are many opportunities for children to extend their wider experiences. For example, they go on visits to the local park and have visitors in school. They learn to take responsibility through tasks such as taking the register to the office.

Staff are very proud to work at this school. They value leaders' investment in them. They state that leaders are considerate of their work-life balance and that they feel supported and listened to.

Governors are very effective. They set a clear strategic direction for the quality of education. Governors know the school and community exceptionally well. They take the success of the school very seriously.

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 September 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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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	103144
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10290514
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	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Phillips
Headteacher	Sally Leese
Website	www.castlevalenursery.co.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	9 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been some staff changes, including a new deputy headteacher and a new assistant headteacher.
- The school works in partnership with local nursery settings.
- No children attend alternative provision.

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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector completed deep dives in communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and to some children about their learning, and looked at samples of children's work.

- The inspector met regularly with the headteacher and the senior leadership team. She also spoke to the SEND coordinator and the SEND team.
- The inspector spoke to the headteacher and staff about children’s behaviour and policies and procedures. The inspector observed children’s behaviour.
- The inspector spoke with children, including children with SEND, to hear their views of their education as well as about behaviour and safety.
- The inspector reviewed information about other areas of learning and the wider curriculum.
- The inspector met with some parents and reviewed responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector spoke by telephone with the quality improvement and strategy early years adviser from the local authority about the work of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the chair of governors and other governors.
- The inspector spoke with staff and considered their responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children’s interests first.

Inspection team

Lynda Townsend, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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