

# Inspection of Balham Nursery School

72 Endlesham Road, Balham, London SW12 8JL

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Inspection dates:	29 and 30 January 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Children flourish at Balham Nursery School. They feel safe, happy, and well cared for. A strong sense of community permeates the school. As one child expressed it, 'we are all friends here'. The positive relationships enable children to trust that adults will listen to them and act on any concerns.

The school has high expectations of all its children. It ensures that staff support children's learning and personal development skilfully. Children rise to these expectations, engaging with enthusiasm and taking pride in what they do. For example, in activities related to early mathematics, children confidently explore mathematical concepts using hands-on materials. They show a growing understanding of important knowledge.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They are kind, considerate and respectful towards one another and staff. They engage well in activities and their interactions during play are cooperative and positive. Instances of challenging behaviour are rare and managed swiftly and sensitively by staff, who provide consistent and nurturing support.

The school offers a range of enriching opportunities beyond the classroom, such as nature walks, and visits to local parks and to the local library. These experiences broaden children's horizons, foster their curiosity and develop their keenness to explore. For example, children explained how they had made bird feeders and then learned the names of different bird species.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum that helps children to build on their knowledge and skills, step by step, as they grow and develop. The curriculum is well structured and supports children to build a deep understanding of the key concepts in the curriculum. In creative play, for example, children develop fine motor skills and coordination from cutting and sticking, and then progress to more complex tasks like creating collaborative art pieces during 'no pens day'. However, in a few areas of the curriculum the essential knowledge that children need to build on is not identified well. Activities aimed at the two-year-olds are, at times, the same for older children. As a result, some children do not develop as deep an understanding as they could in these areas.

The school ensures that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified effectively and receive appropriate support. Staff work closely with families and external specialists so that children with SEND can access the full benefits of the school's curriculum. Staff are sensitive to each child's needs, fostering children's independence and confidence skilfully.

Staff have created a rich learning environment. They use questions carefully to check children's understanding, then provide support where necessary. Children enjoy a well-designed curriculum that supports their language development and social and emotional growth. For example, during a sensory activity, children described textures

enthusiastically, using new vocabulary and demonstrating a developing awareness of the world around them. When cutting vegetables to make soup, children described the different colours and textures. In most instances, teaching develops children's language well, skilfully drawing out a deeper understanding. However, in some cases, teaching is not as purposeful when supporting children's early mathematical development and communication.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They demonstrate high levels of motivation and engagement during activities. For instance, in an imaginative play session, children worked collaboratively, taking turns and solving problems together. Children's attendance at school is high, as they are eager to attend and enjoy their time here. The school closely monitors attendance and works with families to support those who may need additional help.

The school's approach to children's personal development is particularly effective. Children develop a strong sense of respect and empathy. They enjoy learning about different cultures and communities, and a recent activity exploring family traditions sparked thoughtful discussions. Children eagerly take on responsibilities, whether it is helping to tidy up or contributing to group activities. These opportunities build their leadership skills and confidence.

The school, at all levels, is committed to the continuous improvement of its work. Leaders and staff are proactive in identifying areas for development and implementing actions to improve practice. Governors provide effective support and challenge, with a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. There have been several changes at the school, and governors and leaders have overcome any challenges sensitively. Staff feel well supported and appreciate the efforts that leaders make to ensure their well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Sometimes, the school does not ensure that staff are fully confident in developing children's communication, language, and early mathematical understanding. At times, teaching choices are not helping to deepen children's vocabulary or thinking. This means that some children do not develop some key skills as securely as they could. The school should ensure that staff's expertise is strengthened, so that teaching supports children's communication, language, and early mathematical development consistently well.
- The way activities and questions are adapted for younger and older children is not always clear. At times, learning does not build as precisely as it could on what children

already know and can do. As a result, some children do not make as much progress as they could through the school's curriculum. The school should ensure that all areas of the curriculum are carefully sequenced so that all children benefit consistently from activities and questions that support their next steps in learning.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	100990
<b>Local authority</b>	Wandsworth
<b>Inspection number</b>	10323267
<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	53
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Parth Pamnani
<b>Headteacher</b>	Natasha Crabbe
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.balham-nursery.wandsworth.sch.uk">www.balham-nursery.wandsworth.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 April 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of a hard federation with two other maintained nursery schools in Wandsworth.
- The school provides some places for two-year-old children.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, mathematics and understanding the world. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff and spoke to some children during their learning.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other areas of learning.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and children; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the governing body. They also spoke with the school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including records relating to attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, children and staff, including through their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

## **Inspection team**

Adam Vincent, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Newby

Ofsted Inspector

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