

Balham Nursery and Children's Centre

72 Endlesham Road, London, SW12 8JL

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Through exceptional leadership, the Nursery and Children's Centre have successfully maintained and built on the strengths identified in the last inspection.
- Children make outstanding progress, and attainment by the end of Nursery is securely above that expected.
- Children make rapid gains in communication and language because of the emphasis placed on speaking and listening.
- They apply their number skills very well to solve practical problems.
- In physical development, children make outstanding gains in balancing, coordination and travel.
- Children gain an exceptional understanding of the world around them.
- Art and role play contribute very well to children's creativity and expression.
- Teaching is creative, inspirational and promotes high-quality learning for children.
- Teachers and staff expect the best of the children. Children are eager to learn.
- Challenging and interesting learning activities are set at the right level for children's different needs.
- Children thrive in an extremely positive and safe learning environment.
- Strong relationships are established, and children are cooperative, considerate and respectful.
- Children's behaviour enhances their learning and is mostly exemplary.
- An established and experienced headteacher provides strong leadership and educational direction. Other key leaders are very effective.
- The headteacher and staff are firmly focused on providing high-quality teaching and exciting learning experiences.
- Teamwork is strong and all staff show determination in doing the very best for the children and their families.
- With outstanding leadership and strong teamwork, there is an outstanding capacity for further development.
- The Children's Centre provides a range of quality services to support parents.
- Governance, the local authority and an external adviser make a valuable contribution to the school's success.
- Highly productive partnerships have been established with parents and other agencies.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in 16 sessions, including some joint observations with the headteacher.
- He held discussions with the headteacher, staff, parents and carers, a representative from the local authority, an external adviser and members of the governing body.
- The inspector took account of the 14 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and the school's own survey.
- Responses to an inspection questionnaire from 19 staff were analysed.
- The inspector examined school policies, information about children's attainment and progress, teachers' plans, children's work and the school's planning for improvement.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Balham is a maintained nursery school with a Children's Centre providing extended services for families. There is also provision for two-year-old children.
- The Children's Centre provides a range of classes for adults, including parent and baby sessions, baby massage, health care and positive parenting.
- All provision and services are managed by the governing body.
- Just over a third of the children are White British. The other children are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.
- Thirteen different languages are currently spoken in the school, including English, Italian, Polish, Arabic and Urdu.
- About a third of the children speak English as an additional language and a small number are at an early stage of English acquisition.
- The proportion of disabled children and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- A small proportion of children are known to be eligible for free school meals.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen some elements of teaching by making sure that:
 - all questioning matches the high-quality practice in the Nursery and extends children's thinking.
 - opportunities are not missed for staff to further extend children's learning through suitable intervention and support.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children enter the school with a broad range of knowledge, understanding and skills but overall, most year groups enter with attainment expected for their age.
- The two-year-olds get off to a very good start and integrate well with the older children.
- High-quality teaching and an exciting range of learning activities contribute to children's rapid progress in all areas of learning. By the end of the Nursery, children's attainment is securely above that expected for their age.
- All groups of children make exceptional progress. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make outstanding progress because of the well-planned support they receive.
- The learning of the most-able children is successfully extended through more demanding activities and tasks. They rise to the challenges set.
- Children's communication and language skills develop extremely well because of the strong emphasis that adults place on these areas. For example, children made exceptional progress in 'acting out' *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Adults created a really good setting with furniture, props and utensils. The children chose the characters they wanted to be, dressed up in appropriate costumes and practised their speaking parts. They used animation and expression to great effect.
- Those at an early stage of learning English receive effective support, and their progress is carefully checked. Most make rapid gains in acquiring and using English.
- Children thoroughly enjoy the wide range of attractive books available. They are attentive and enthusiastic at story time and show a very clear understanding of characters and the events in the stories.
- Children make very good progress in mark-making and early writing skills because they are provided with plenty of opportunities to practise using different writing implements. The most able write imaginative stories about animals in spring.
- In mathematics, children use a range of learning resources to develop counting skills and to solve problems. More-able children work with large numbers and identify numbers which are more or less than a given number.
- Children make exceptional progress in physical development as they practise balancing, climbing and different forms of travel. One small group developed their throwing skills well, as they threw objects into a box from a set distance with increasing accuracy. With help, they recorded their results.
- In their understanding of the world, children make outstanding progress. For example, after viewing some interesting photographs of castles, children were inspired to design their own, using wooden blocks. They worked well in creating a secure structure.
- Children make outstanding progress in creative development and expressive arts. In a successful painting activity in the garden, children explored mixing paints to create a deep pink, the same colour as the blossom on the ornamental cherry tree.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- High-quality teaching is a key factor contributing to children's exceptional progress. Teaching is enthusiastic, imaginative and inspirational. Parents and carers reported to the inspector, 'Teaching is brilliant.'
- All adults create a very positive climate for learning and promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. As a result, children grow in confidence, are enthusiastic learners and relate extremely well to others.
- Adults expect the children to do their best, participate and 'have a go'. The children respond

to these high expectations with determination and enthusiasm.

- Adults possess a secure understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework and how children of this age learn. They use this expertise well in planning learning activities.
- Excellent use is made of the well-organised indoor and outdoor accommodation. Outdoor learning activities in the attractive garden setting are particularly interesting.
- Teachers use the information about children's attainment to plan lessons and children's learning. The stimulating activities inside and outside the classroom are demanding and set at the right level for children's different abilities. These engage the children's interest and they make rapid gains in acquiring new knowledge, deepening their understanding and developing skills.
- The teaching of essential skills is effective. Adults are good role models for reading, and successfully promote children's knowledge and understanding of letters and the sounds they make. Adults use practical learning resources well to promote children's knowledge and skills in mathematics.
- There are good opportunities provided to promote children's speaking skills. Adults use questioning and prompting to promote children's talk and for them to express their ideas. Most of the questioning is of a high calibre and has a positive impact on children's learning. At times, the questioning falls below this high standard and is less successful in engaging children and in drawing out their thoughts and ideas.
- Overall, there is an effective blend of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Children have many opportunities to explore, be imaginative and learn independently. In the main, adults are skilled at knowing when to allow children to learn on their own and when to intervene and provide guidance and support. Just occasionally, opportunities are missed to intervene and provide suitable guidance to move children's learning on.
- Children are strongly encouraged to talk about their learning and have a say in the activities they choose. Each child has a memory book, a clear record of their learning with photos and samples of work. Adults include careful notes of children's thoughts and views.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The parents and carers who completed the online survey and those that spoke to the inspector were unanimously very positive about children's behaviour and safety. Furthermore, they strongly agreed that their children were happy at school and well looked after.
- Children make outstanding progress in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because of the school's extremely positive and welcoming atmosphere and the high-quality relationships which adults establish with children.
- Children grow in confidence, are eager to try new things and to participate in the range of indoor and outdoor learning adventures.
- They learn and play together extremely well. Children take turns with others and consider others' ideas and suggestions. They form very positive relationships with adults and their peers.
- Behaviour is mostly outstanding and this contributes well to children's high-quality learning. The very few children with behaviour issues are skilfully managed and supported by adults.
- The school's clear records of incidents indicate that behaviour and safety are typically outstanding over time.
- Children are extremely keen to come to school because it is such a stimulating place to learn. The vast majority of parents and carers ensure that their children attend regularly and arrive on time.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Nursery and Children's Centre continue to be extremely well led and managed, and this results in high-quality teaching, exceptional care and outstanding outcomes for children.
- The established and experienced headteacher provides strong leadership and educational direction. The school aims to, and succeeds in being, a centre of excellence in early childhood education. All policies and actions are driven by the interests of the child. All staff and governors share these key principles and values.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and family service manager and staff all work extremely well together. Teamwork is strong and all staff show determination in doing the very best for children and their families.
- Through clear analysis and checking, leaders, staff and governors have a clear overview of the school's performance. Successful action is taken to make any necessary improvements.
- Considerable emphasis is placed on providing high-quality teaching and exciting learning activities. There are very good procedures for assessing the performance of staff. Training and development are well linked to the school's improvement priorities. A number of staff have, or are, pursuing higher degrees in Early Years education.
- The local authority provides good support and has clear knowledge of the school. Effective use is also made of an external adviser. Both the local authority and external adviser make a valuable contribution to the school's continuous drive for improvement.
- Children from a range backgrounds and cultures learn and develop in an extremely harmonious community. All children, regardless of ability, background, needs or race are highly valued as a unique individual. There is no place for discrimination of any form at Balham and all children have access to the activities offered.
- The school has been particularly successful in engaging with and supporting its parents and carers. They are extremely satisfied with the care and education provided for their children. They are especially pleased with the leadership and management of the organisation, children's sense of enjoyment, safety and the information provided. Their many comments included: 'Fabulous nursery', 'Children thrive here' and 'Staff really care for the children'.
- The Children's Centre and Nursery work closely with other agencies in order to provide children and families with the guidance and support they need. Some parents and carers remarked how well the school had helped them through difficulties.

The governance of the school:

- Governance is highly effective. Members of the governing body bring a broad range of expertise and skills to benefit the school. They are extremely supportive and some have remained on the governing body long after their children have left the Nursery. Governors have a clear knowledge and understanding of the school's performance and the community it serves. They receive detailed reports from the headteacher, local authority and an external adviser, so have an accurate view of teaching, learning and how well the school is doing. Governors are up to date with recent requirements for staff performance and development. They attend relevant training to further increase their effectiveness. Governors ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met.

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	100990
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	400445

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Davies-Jones
Headteacher	Helen McAuley
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 May 2010
Telephone number	020 8673 4055
Fax number	020 8675 3627
Email address	admin@balham-nursery.wandsworth.sch.uk

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