

Inspection of an outstanding school: Balham Nursery School

72 Endlesham Road, Balham, London SW12 8JL

Inspection date:

20 April 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. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children come eagerly into school at the start of each day. They greet their friends happily and quickly get stuck into something exciting. Children develop warm and positive relationships with staff. Children are happy, safe and secure in school. Staff are great at supporting children who need a bit more help to settle in or to manage their emotions.

Staff are always looking for ways of making learning meaningful. Children have plenty of time to play, find things out and explore. They spend lots of time outside and enjoy activities such as climbing, riding the bikes and finding 'treasure' in the sand.

The school's friendly atmosphere helps all children to feel welcome and included. Children behave very well. Older children are excellent role models to the younger ones, helping to serve food at lunchtimes, for example. Children show kindness to others. They enjoy looking after the school's pets. They particularly enjoy it when Seamus, the school's dog, comes to keep them company.

Everyone is focused on helping children to become confident, independent and resilient. Staff share leaders' high expectations for children's learning and personal development. One step at a time, children build their knowledge and understanding. They achieve well. In a few instances, though, staff are unclear about how to extend children's learning, including their language development.

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

Leaders provide an ambitious curriculum. They encourage children to follow their interests and learn through play. Leaders are clear about what children need to be able to do in

each area of learning. From the time children join the school, staff work closely with parents and carers to understand each child's needs and circumstances. Over time, children achieve well. Even though they are sad to say goodbye, children are well prepared for the move to primary school.

Leaders make sure that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the support they need. Staff work alongside other professionals, such as music and speech therapists, to identify and meet children's needs.

Leaders have introduced a new approach for checking what children know and can do in each area of learning. However, there are some inconsistencies in how staff implement this approach. Sometimes, staff are unsure about what children know and can do across the curriculum.

Staff respond imaginatively to children's ideas. For example, after seeing a mouse out in the garden, children were quickly enthused, wanting it to come back. Staff inspired children to write letters to the mouse and draw pictures to entice him back. Staff promote early literacy and mathematics. During story time, older children used words such as 'character' and 'solution' when retelling their stories using props. Younger children clapped with delight when they remembered the repeated phrases in 'The Gingerbread Man'. At the dough station, staff encourage children to count the ingredients and measure carefully the right amount of salt, flour and water to make dough.

Children enjoy opportunities to solve problems. For example, children spotted that the water from the hose was running in one direction along the pavement. They wanted to stop the water. Together, and with the support of staff, they found solutions to create a dam using different objects and tools.

Most of the time, staff use interactions effectively to support children's language and communication. For example, as children programmed the electronic devices to make patterns on the floor, staff described what children were doing and reinforced important words. At the water tray, staff encouraged children to use words such as 'stir' and 'pour' as they made 'tea'. However, sometimes, staff interactions are not effective at supporting children's language and communication skills. This holds back children's learning.

The strong emphasis on children's wider development helps children to manage different situations well. They learn to share and wait their turn. Children's positive behaviour helps everyone to learn and play happily. Parents used words such as 'blossom' and 'flourish' to describe how well their children's confidence grows during their time here. Children learn about different cultures, festivals and traditions. For example, recently, leaders invited families into school to share their experiences of breaking fast during Ramadan.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel valued by leaders, including governors. Leaders have made changes this year to further reduce staff workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all the required checks are completed to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Leaders make sure that staff understand how to identify and report any concerns about children's welfare. Leaders take swift and appropriate action to ensure that children are safe. Leaders work effectively with a range of professionals to ensure that vulnerable children and families get the help they need. Leaders' strong partnerships with families allow them to provide help as soon as it is needed. For example, leaders arrange workshops, counselling or support from the school's social worker.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff are still getting used to the new approaches for checking children's achievements in each area of learning. There are inconsistencies in how well staff check what children know and can do. This leads to some staff not being clear about what children need to learn next across the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that the new approaches are firmly embedded. They should ensure that staff and parents have the information they need about children's achievements and next steps.
- There are inconsistencies in how the curriculum is implemented. Sometimes, staff do not make the most of opportunities to extend children's learning. Some of their interactions with children do not promote children's language and communication development well enough. This hinders children's learning. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently well. They should ensure that interactions with children are of a consistently high quality to support children's language and communication development.

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 May 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

Unique reference number	100990
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	10268755
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	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Adam Ockelford
Headteacher	Emma Williams (executive headteacher)
Website	www.balham-nursery.wandsworth.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2018, 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 executive headteacher leads all three schools.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher. The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of governors. He spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and understanding the world. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, spoke to members of staff, visited sessions and looked at documentation related to children's

learning. Inspectors also sampled other areas of learning, including mathematics and physical development.

- Inspectors reviewed the single central record of staff suitability checks. Inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding. They sampled safeguarding records.
- Inspectors observed children’s learning throughout the day. Inspectors spoke with children informally. They held meetings with key persons to talk about children’s learning and development. Inspectors reviewed the responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the day. They considered parents’ responses to Ofsted’s parent questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Kieran Bird

His Majesty’s Inspector

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