

Inspection of St Thomas Centre Nursery School

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

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 July 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 more than 10 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. The school received an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Act on 14 February 2023. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children make a good start to their education. They are happy and safe at school. They settle in quickly because staff are nurturing and attentive. Staff provide children with a range of interesting activities that help them to develop personal attributes such as collaboration, resilience and curiosity. The broad range of learning opportunities offered by the school help children to become confident and successful learners.

The school focuses strongly on supporting children's emotional needs. Staff understand the complexities of early childhood development and the need to help young children manage their emotions. They read stories, such as 'The Colour Monster', to help children understand their feelings and express them.

Children behave well. They learn from the staff to be kind, respectful and cooperate with others. They respond appropriately to adult requests and instructions, including at lunchtime. Most children become absorbed in the activities offered, especially when working with the artist-in-residence to explore different media in the studio classroom.

The school extends children's personal development well through exciting trips, visitors and events. For example, children visit local supermarkets, farms and nature centres. They also gain an appreciation of other faiths and cultures through experiences such as celebrating Diwali and Chinese cookery.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has reviewed and revised its curriculum. It is ambitious and designed to meet the needs and interests of children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It ensures that children successfully build their knowledge and skills as they move through the school. The key knowledge and vocabulary that the school wants children to learn is set out clearly in each area of learning. This ensures that they are ready for the next stage of their education and transition to primary school.

Promoting good speaking and listening skills is a golden thread which runs through the whole curriculum. Most staff ask questions to check children's understanding and encourage dialogue. They teach children the importance of listening to others. However, on occasion, some children are not fully included in activities, and interaction between some staff and children can be limited. This constrains how well the school extends and develops some children's early communication and language skills.

Literacy is a key focus within the school. Carefully selected books sit at the heart of the curriculum to foster a love of reading. Staff make story time interesting by reading carefully chosen books with enthusiasm and enjoyment. They send books home to encourage parents to share books with their children.

The school uses the space and resources in all classrooms effectively to cultivate children's creative skills. Natural resources play an important part in children's learning. For example, children use real vegetables in the home corner and make portraits using corks, cones and acorns. Outdoors, children increase their physical stamina and strength through activities such as climbing, balancing and running. However, the curriculum implementation in the outdoor environment is less well developed than in the indoor environment. It does not yet provide sufficient opportunities for children to practise and develop all areas of learning, such as mathematics.

The school collaborates with parents, carers and wider professionals effectively to identify children with SEND. The valuable information gathered, and skilled observation of staff, help the school to provide children with the support they need at the right time. Children with SEND progress well through the curriculum and in their wider development.

There are effective systems in place to check on and monitor children's attendance. The school acts quickly to establish the reason for any unknown absences to ensure that children are safe. Newsletters and meetings encourage parents to understand the importance and value of regular attendance.

The school's approach to personal development is well considered. Each child's uniqueness is recognised and valued through the school's 'celebrating me' work. Children learn about self-care and hygiene from a young age. All snacks and school meals are healthy and nutritious.

Parents have positive views of the school. They appreciate the workshops provided to help them support their children at home. Parents and children from all cultural backgrounds are welcomed and fully included in the life of the school.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They appreciate the support the school provides for their well-being and consideration of their workload.

Governors use their expertise to provide the school with valuable support and challenge. They demonstrate a strong sense of purpose and passion to bring about positive outcomes for children, parents, carers and staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, the level of staff interaction with some children is variable. This results in some children not being actively involved in some activities or not

talking to an adult to develop their communication and language skills as fully as they should. The school should ensure that all staff have the expertise and skills needed to promote effective dialogue and interaction with all children consistently.

- Curriculum provision is less well developed in the outdoor learning environment. Some activities lack a focus, and the learning intention is unclear. The school should ensure that outdoor activities contribute to, and extend, children's early development in all areas of 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

Unique reference number	103124
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10294465
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	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sean Delaney
Headteacher	Stuart Brown (Interim Headteacher)
Website	www.stthomascentrenursery.sch.life
Date of previous inspection	14 February 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- St Thomas Centre Nursery works closely with Allen’s Croft Nursery, Lillian De Lissa Nursery and Shenley Fields Nursery in a small cluster. This cluster continues to be served by a ‘local committee’ but remains accountable to the Birmingham Federation Governing Body who oversee nine nursery schools within the local authority.
- Since the last inspection, the interim headteacher’s contract has been extended to December 2024.
- There has been a staffing restructure. This has led to staff changes.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgment 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also had a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, literacy and understanding of the world. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited classrooms, spoke to staff and children and looked at samples of children's work.
- The inspectors met with staff to talk about the curriculum, staff workload and the behaviour and personal development of pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors checked the school's single central record; spoke to leaders about safeguarding procedures; took account of the views of 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.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings and reviews carried out by governors and other colleagues in the cluster.
- The inspectors observed children's behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime.
- The inspectors talked to parents before and after school and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They gathered the views of staff on site through discussions and from their online survey responses.

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jeremy Bird

Ofsted Inspector

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