

# Castle Vale Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	103144
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	376834
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	David Speakman

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–4
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	105
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Holloway
<b>Headteacher</b>	Deborah Jones (Acting Head)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	03 June 2009
<b>School address</b>	Yatesbury Avenue Castle Vale Birmingham B35 6DU
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<b>Age group</b>	3–4
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	28–29 May 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	376834



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## Introduction

Inspection team

David Speakman

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent three and a half hours directly observing children learning in 11 different focus groups and in free flow activities covering all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. He talked to children informally during observations. All staff were observed. Meetings were held with members of the governing body and staff. The inspector scrutinised the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils. He observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including improvement plans, self-evaluation documents, and assessment data to monitor children's progress. Questionnaire responses from 55 parents and carers and seven members of staff were analysed.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized nursery school. Children attend for 15 hours each week: four morning or afternoon sessions of two-and-a-half hours and one session of five hours each week, called A Busy Day. Most children come from a White British background. A few children speak English as an additional language and most of these have low levels of English competence. The school identifies disabled children or those with special educational needs early. The proportion of children supported by early years' action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is below average. A minority, but a significant number, have additional needs, mostly with challenging behaviour on entry to the nursery.

There is currently an acting headteacher. A new headteacher has been appointed to take up post in September this year. The nursery is situated in the same building as Castle Vale Children's Centre, which is subject to a separate inspection, conducted concurrently with this inspection. The governing body is responsible for the nursery school and the children's centre.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>

## Key findings

- This is an outstanding nursery which gives children an excellent start to their education. It is outstanding because it enables children to become effective, independent learners with a strong spirit of curiosity and an excellent ability to learn through investigation.
- Achievement across all areas of learning and for all groups is outstanding. Children become confident communicators very quickly and develop a secure knowledge of number and shape. They are confident physically and learn a great deal about the world around them. Children have good levels of creativity as shown in their paintings, dance and role-play.
- Teaching is of a consistently high quality. All adults provide an equally high standard in their teaching so children experience continuity as they move from one activity to another. Much teaching is inspirational so children fully and enthusiastically engage. Teachers provide for a wide range of learning styles to meet all children’s preferences, but do not use computers and other technology enough to enable children to practise and consolidate new learning.
- Children’s behaviour is exceptional and makes a significant contribution to the high quality of learning. Children are highly stimulated by the activities and engage in learning for extended periods. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe whilst in the nursery or on visits. They identify possible hazards for themselves and respond accordingly, going about their tasks safely. They approach adults for help, with confidence.
- The strength of leadership and management lies in the extremely strong level of team work through the leadership of teaching and the management of performance and the support that all staff members give to each other. All contribute in line with their strengths. This has resulted in a highly-skilled team in which all adults have the skills and knowledge to contribute significantly to the success of this outstanding nursery.

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

- Enrich the already excellent range of learning opportunities by developing further the use of technology to support learning by:
  - providing children with opportunities to use computers or the interactive boards, using appropriate software, to consolidate their skills and new learning in literacy and mathematics
  - enabling children to develop further their skills in technology in preparation for the next steps in their education.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children achieve exceptionally well in all areas of learning. From starting points that are well below those expected for their age the large majority of children reach their age-related expectations in all areas of learning, with a small minority exceeding them. Disabled children and those with special educational needs are identified quickly and receive well focused support from an early stage. This means they make excellent progress from the very beginning. The few who speak English as an additional language are well supported and soon acquire enough English to become confident in speaking and listening and to achieve their full potential. This means that the gaps between the lowest attaining pupils and national expectations are quickly closing.

The nursery places high priority on enabling children to develop literacy skills from a very early stage. Constant interaction between adults and children, and between children themselves, means they acquire communication skills quickly and they confidently engage in lively conversation with other children and adults, clearly expressing their ideas. One child, amazed at a magnet attracting a number of small metal discs, enthusiastically asked the teacher about this. A meaningful discussion followed, in which children clearly expressed their thoughts, but still maintained that the magnet was 'a magic lollypop stick'.

Children quickly learn early reading skills which provide a secure foundation for further work. Their learning about letters and sounds is threaded through a wide range of activities. They know the sounds most letters make and are able to break words down into syllables, accurately clapping out the rhythms of their names or days of the week, for example. All children connect books with stories and can retell a story using pictures. A few more-able children can read fluently; one child read 'We're all going on a bear hunt' from cover to cover, another child confidently re-arranged pictures into the order of the story whilst other children were concerned that 'the bear was angry and that's why he chased them.

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Children who are reserved and find more difficulty than most in engaging in learning through play, absolutely thrive in the 'forest school' sessions. When asked to find a friend for the snail one of the children had brought into school, children really engaged with the outdoor environment and enthusiastically looked under stones, into the compost bin, in long grass and under benches to find another snail. They were inquisitive and asked a host of questions about anything they found, showing that their self-confidence and self-esteem were rapidly growing. Children are inquisitive learners because of the strong focus on them discovering things for themselves. They have excellent levels of independence and are confident to try new experiences and to be adventurous.

Children use their imaginations very well to support their creativity. Their paintings are bold and colourful and accurate in preserving shape, such as in their paintings of bears. They sing confidently and move expressively to different styles and rhythms of music. They really love story time and confidently tell stories, describing incidents in their own experiences. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers believe that their children are making good progress at nursery.

### **Quality of teaching**

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire say that their children are taught well and that the school meets their children's individual needs. Adults respond exceptionally well to children's comments during teaching sessions so children engage readily and enthusiastically. Activities are very effective in promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, especially in developing curiosity and a desire to find out about why things are as they are. Children were fascinated in the outdoor environment during a 'forest school' session. They related exceptionally well to the natural environment and showed great care and respect for small living creatures.

The nursery is organised into different activity areas which enable adults to focus on specific knowledge, understanding and skills and ensure that all areas of learning are very well equipped and resources readily available. Highly focused questioning when adults join in with the children's play develops vocabulary and language particularly well. For example, discussion developed when children were searching for teddy bears in the garden area. Each bear was identified by a shape and children confidently named the shapes, counted sides and corners and described them. The dialogue became more interesting when they were talking about the 'squashed circle' which was soon renamed an 'egg shape' and finally an oval. This was typical of the skilled way in which teachers guide discussion so that ideas come from the children themselves and their learning is memorable.

Assessments are very carefully carried out. They are moderated within the nursery so that all of the assessments made on children's progress and attainment within the different family groups are of an equally high level of reliability. During joint planning meetings, all staff use assessment data to plan the next challenging steps for all groups of children.

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A number of common strengths have developed under the robust monitoring of the headteacher. Teachers have very high expectations of what children are capable of doing, and provide consistent high levels of challenge to move children at all attainment levels on rapidly. Feedback is continuous and teachers constantly encourage children to move on to the next steps in their learning. All adults are skilled in recognising and providing prompt support for those at risk of falling behind, disabled children or those with special educational needs. Adults are acutely aware each child's learning needs and carefully tailor learning activities to match their capabilities exceptionally well, ensuring successful learning. In the same way adults are highly effective in pushing high-attaining children on in their work.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Children love coming to nursery each day. This is reflected in their high levels of engagement in activities. Consistently excellent behaviour makes a significant contribution to the quality of learning and the calm yet busy atmosphere in this nursery. Children are clear about the standard of behaviour expected and are eager to cooperate. They share and take turns. They behave in a safe manner, such as in a vigorous dance session where there was no bumping and each child was aware of other children's space. They have a very clear understanding of risks because adults encourage them to assess potential dangers and then to proceed carefully.

Children are very considerate and cooperate well with each other in group activities. They are respectful of others' views and listen to other children. They feel safe in the nursery and all questionnaire responses confirm that parents and carers are confident of their children's safety and have no concerns about behaviour. No incidents of bullying of any type or inappropriate behaviour have been recorded for some time. Excellent levels of personal and emotional support ensure children whose circumstances make them vulnerable, feel safe in the nursery.

**Leadership and management**

The staff team, very ably led by the acting headteacher, work exceptionally well together, using their considerable skills to provide an outstanding education. Day-to-day management and professional supervision are of a high quality and support the professional development of all staff leading to continuous improvement. At the time of its previous inspection, the nursery was judged to be outstanding. Since then, strengths have been maintained and built upon. The issue regarding the recording of assessment information has been fully addressed. Consequently, the school provides excellent value for money and has an exceptional capacity to improve even further.

The governing body has a clear understanding of the nursery's effectiveness. Governors are fully involved in monitoring, evaluating and in strategic planning. They meet all of their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding. This is given high priority in the nursery, and arrangements for keeping children safe are very well managed. Leaders ensure the safe recruitment of staff and full checks are made on

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any adult working in the nursery. Staff are well trained in child protection to a level appropriate to their responsibility; all are vigilant. They make very careful checks of any potential hazards.

The curriculum is designed to provide children with rich opportunities to develop their communication, language, numeracy and personal skills but at present not enough use is made of technology to further support the excellent learning. The 'investigate and explore' approach to learning is highly effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children show respectful attitudes to other children, whatever their background or ability. Equality is promoted exceptionally well and there is no discrimination of any kind. Each child's curriculum experiences are carefully monitored to ensure all children access all areas of learning regularly. This ensures that all children have equality of opportunity to succeed.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



30 May 2012

Dear Children

### **Inspection of Castle Vale Nursery School, Birmingham, B35 6DU**

I felt very welcome when I came to visit you recently. Thank you. I really enjoyed watching you learn and get involved in all the different activities adults put on for you. I could see how much you enjoy the nursery because you all joined in and had smiles on your faces for most of the time. Your nursery is outstanding, which means it gives you an excellent start to your school life. You all make excellent progress and are very keen to learn new things.

These are the things I liked most.

- Activities are really interesting so you enjoy joining in and learn lots of new things every day.
- You all behave really well so the nursery is a very happy place to be and you all feel safe. It was good to see you all being so kind to each other.
- Adults ask lots of questions which help you think, talk about what you are learning and find things out for yourselves.
- You stick at tasks until they are completed, however long it takes.
- Your skills in speaking and listening, early reading and writing, and counting develop exceptionally well during the time you are in the nursery.

I did not see many of you using computers or the interactive white board to help you learn. So I have asked the adults and governors to give you more opportunity to use computers to improve even further what is already a superb education.

Even though your nursery is outstanding, all the adults who look after you want to keep improving it. You can help by continuing to do your best at everything and carry on sticking at tasks, even when you find them hard. I hope you continue to enjoy nursery.

Yours sincerely

David Speakman  
Lead inspector

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