

St Thomas Centre Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103124
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355322
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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

The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Andrews
Headteacher	Fran Munby
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2008
School address	Bell Barn Road Lee Bank, Birmingham B15 2AF
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Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision

Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	Not previously inspected
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Age group	3–5
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 11 lessons and saw four teachers and support staff teaching both in the nursery and day care. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the headteacher's monitoring of teaching and learning, the school development plan, community cohesion action plan, teachers' planning and records of children's progress, and 32 questionnaires returned by parents were analysed. They held discussions with staff, parents and the Chair of the Governing Body.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- To what extent do all children make good progress, but especially children who are more capable?
- What is the impact of the strategies used to improve boys' writing
- How well does the governing body gain an independent view of the school?
- What are the contributory factors to children's outstanding personal, social and emotional development?

Information about the school

The nursery provides full-time education for children prior to their joining Reception classes in other primary schools. It also offers day care for up to 56 two- to four-year-olds. The nursery shares a site with the children's centre which is led and managed separately. Nearly half of children are from different ethnic backgrounds, the largest ethnic group being Black Caribbean. Almost all of these children are at the early stages of language acquisition, this is above average. One fifth of children, this is broadly average, have special educational needs and/or disabilities; their needs are speech and language related. Over one third of the children are eligible for free school meals.

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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Since the last inspection, the nursery has continued to offer an outstanding quality of education. Children exceed the expectations for their age in all areas of learning and make outstanding progress, particularly in speaking and listening, and personal, social and emotional development. Children feel very safe in tackling new learning experiences due to outstanding relationships with staff, excellent care, guidance and support, and consistency of routines. They have excellent knowledge of being safe both indoors and outdoors. All groups of children achieve exceptionally well from well below average attainment on entry. More capable children also make outstanding progress in all but writing, where their progress is inconsistent. This is because not all staff use the excellent knowledge they have of children to formally identify the next steps of learning in their planning.

Parents are rightly delighted with all that the nursery has to offer. 'We can go to work assured that our children are expertly looked after.' 'The staff are amazing, they know our children so well and we are always made to feel welcome.' These are just a couple of comments from delighted parents which are typical of many others. This is a nursery school where all children are valued for their uniqueness and given tailor-made support to meet their individual needs. Staff are reflective practitioners who are constantly seeking to find the best ways to improve children's life chances and fully implement the nursery's aims of 'happy, healthy children playing and learning together'. There is a seamless approach from day care to nursery, and all children learn and play very well together.

Expertly led by a highly knowledgeable headteacher and senior leadership team, every opportunity is taken to evaluate aspects of provision in order to improve children's rates of progress. The recent focus on developing boys' writing has yielded excellent results with boys making exceptional gains in learning. The school has excellent capacity to improve because of accurate self-evaluation and a track record of sustained improvement. This is particularly the case for raising standards for children who are learning English as an additional language through high-quality teaching of vocabulary and sentence construction through play.

All children thrive and are very well prepared for the move to Reception classes. The nursery is particularly successful at helping all children, including those with learning difficulties, especially in speech and language, to have full access to the curriculum. Excellent partnerships with parents, carers and with a range of agencies make a significant contribution to children's very good achievement and well-being. The welfare of children, both in the nursery and in day care is exceptional as safeguarding procedures are robust and very detailed risk assessments are undertaken for all activities.

Children have excellent attitudes to learning, they love growing their flowers and vegetables and squeal with glee when they have pulled out a radish or potato that they

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have grown. They have excellent knowledge of staying healthy and they marvel in delight when they see their home-grown produce served in the canteen. Children enjoy their fruit and snack time and are very active in the outdoor area. Their behaviour in lessons is excellent and attendance is good. They sing beautifully and thoroughly enjoy making music using triangles and drums. Contributory factors to children's outstanding achievement are found in the excellent teaching and vibrant curriculum which is underpinned by a very wide range of opportunities for their very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Governance is good. Governors are knowledgeable and contribute significantly to the development of high quality provision but they do not yet have an independent view of the school. They fulfil their statutory duties and are fully involved in all aspects of school improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers' plans reflect the next steps of learning so that more capable children have further opportunities to develop their writing skills.
- Develop the role of the governing body so that they can have a more independent view of the nursery's work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children**1**

Children are very polite to one another and look after each other well, especially when playing on their bicycles outdoors. They contribute to the community by undertaking lots of jobs around the nursery, raising funds for charities and distributing harvest produce for the elderly. Their very positive attitudes contribute to their outstanding progress in all areas of learning because they are attentive, try hard and use resources with care and consideration. When feeding the newly arrived fish in the fish tank, children from day care ensured that fairness prevailed when taking turns. Children thoroughly enjoy school and are enthusiastic about any new experience that they are presented with, such as eating healthy vegetable curries during lunch time. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language make very good progress especially in speaking and listening because of the high expectations of teachers in asking them to repeat key words and speak using full sentences.

Learning, both in the day care and in the nursery, is characterised by children being inquisitive, wanting to find out more, not being afraid to ask for help when they need it and having plenty of hands-on experiences both indoors and outdoors. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent due to the many opportunities given to reflect on nature, such as watching tadpoles develop into frogs, learning from stories with a moral message, working in groups to solve problems, and learning about life styles of their friends from different countries.

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These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	2
Children's attainment ¹	1
The quality of children's learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
Children's behaviour	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which children develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	2
Children's attendance ¹	
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is excellent because all staff are very well trained and know how young children learn. Excellent role modelling by staff underpins the nursery's success in promoting rapid rates in learning. All learning experiences are firmly grounded within a context of a story so children feel secure in the vocabulary that they use. Learning is very exciting because of the excellent curriculum enhanced by a wide range of visits to parks, farms, places of worship and the city centre. Excellent partnerships exist with artists, speech and language therapists, social workers, health visitors and all services based at the children's centre. These have a very positive impact on the excellent learning opportunities because teachers improve their practice by working with such a wide range of professionals. Staff take every opportunity to follow children's interest levels but do not take their eyes off the ball and ensure that children acquire basic skills of reading, writing and number in play situations and in formal group time. The recent focus on developing boys' writing has had a remarkable impact on improved standards. Staff take every opportunity to engage in children's learning outdoors through showing them how to make sand pies, grow vegetables and control their tempers when stuck in traffic jams in the outdoor area!

Staff assess children's learning very accurately and they know the children very well but, on some occasions, they do not use this information to plan the next steps of learning for developing the writing of the most able children. Excellent learning in the nursery and the

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day care centre is characterised by children being totally absorbed in their work. This contributes to their high levels of self-confidence and independence in learning.

A very large majority of parents are delighted with the quality of excellent teaching. They can see the outstanding progress their children make in all areas of learning. They say, and inspectors agree, that the children are safe indoors and outdoors and that their emotional needs are met due to excellent safeguarding procedures.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Outstanding leadership and management are contributory factors to the success of this nursery. Self-evaluation is accurate and all staff are fully consulted on contributing and evaluating the nursery's priorities for improvement. All staff want the very best for the children and will 'move mountains' to ensure that a real joy of learning permeates daily routines. Staff are reflective in their practice, evaluating carefully what they do and wanting to improve on previous best performance. The headteacher has embedded ambition and is driving improvement by having excellent systems for communicating her vision for the nursery and providing regular training for staff in order to implement it. Engagement of partnerships with parents and carers and support agencies is outstanding. 'Special Fridays', where parents and carers come into the nursery to work alongside their children, are highly successful in helping parents understand how their children learn and find out about their progress.

The nursery is rigorous and highly effective in its efforts to promote equality and tackle discrimination. Differences are welcomed, explored and celebrated. 'We are all part of a happy family,' said one highly delighted parent. Safeguarding is excellent and results in children feeling exceptionally safe in learning which contributes to their excellent achievement. Risk assessments and staff training, including that for child protection, are thorough and effective.

The nursery has excellent links and partnerships with other nurseries and schools both locally and internationally. Children benefit greatly from such partnerships because visits, as well as visitors, help bring a fresh perspective and contribute to excellent community cohesion.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the nursery and say that their children get an excellent start to their education. They appreciate all the help and signposting that they are given to activities both in the nursery and the centre. A very small minority of parents would welcome more information on their children's progress. Inspectors found that the nursery has an open door policy where parents can ask at any time for information on their children's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of children registered at St Thomas Centre Nursery to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 80 children registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	78	7	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	72	9	28	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	44	13	41	3	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	56	14	44	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	63	11	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	47	14	44	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	63	12	38	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	56	9	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	53	14	44	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	41	15	47	0	0	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	47	14	44	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	23	72	9	28	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	81	6	19	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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 children's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its children.
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 children. 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a child in their learning and development.
Attainment:	in other phases of school, for example primary schools, attainment is the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. However, there is no national average for three- and four-year-olds. Therefore, in inspections of nursery schools, inspectors take account of expectations in the age-related bands of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of children.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in nursery sessions and over longer periods of time.

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.



15 October 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of St Thomas Centre Nursery, Birmingham, B15 2AF

I am writing you a letter to tell you what I found out when I visited your nursery. Your moms, dads, and carers think that your nursery is excellent and we agree. These are the things we liked most about your nursery.

You make excellent progress in all areas of learning but especially in speaking and listening and personal, social and emotional development.

You behave impeccably and you have excellent attitudes to learning.

The staff make sure that you enjoy learning and they teach you very well.

Everyone in the nursery makes sure that you are very safe, happy and very well looked after.

Your headteacher and senior staff lead the nursery well and are trying to make things better for you all of the time.

You really enjoy outside play and your gardening skills are excellent.

We think the nursery does everything really well but we have asked your teachers to make things even better by making sure that they give those of you who find learning easy more opportunities to develop your writing skills. You can help by asking for more opportunities to write about what you do. We have also asked your governors to look around the nursery to see for themselves how well you are doing. You can help by telling them about how much you like your toys and what you enjoy doing in the nursery.

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

Lead inspector

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