

Inspection of an outstanding school: Bentilee Nursery School

Dawlish Drive, Bentilee, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST2 0HW

Inspection date:

18 July 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 receive a warm and caring welcome to the start of their day. Staff tune sensitively into their key children. Smiles are offered, little hands are held and the very few tears are wiped away. Children enjoy a shared breakfast, quickly followed by settling down to their play and learning. Potions are made, teeth are cleaned and the curiosity cube inspires children's interest throughout the session.

Staff set clear routines and high expectations for children's behaviour. These help all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to know what to do and how to do it. Children play together beautifully. They show interest in and respect for their 'fantastic friends'. Staff handle any little disagreements in a thoughtful way that helps all involved to find a way forward.

Leaders have systems and routines in place to make sure children learn well and are safe. On occasions, leaders' checks of safeguarding are not thorough enough on what is working effectively.

Leaders involve parents and carers in their child's learning in many ways. This makes a positive difference to the family feel of the nursery. Parents shared their appreciation of the care, time and help they receive.

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

Leaders want the very best for the children and their families. They work tirelessly to review and refine practice. Leaders and staff have spent time wisely in thinking about and setting out the learning that children experience throughout their time at the nursery.

They know that the needs of a young two-year-old differ greatly from the older children who are on their way to school. Staff are exceptionally skilled at tuning into each child's needs and interests. This allows them to quickly identify any additional needs. Staff provide a range of targeted support and activities that help all children, including those with SEND, to be successful learners.

Staff show great skill in and dedication to helping children grow and develop. Children become independent individuals and confident communicators. Staff always keep one eye on the endpoints that they want children to reach. They use their knowledge of each child and of child development to give praise and to set the next step of learning. Children gain greatly from the knowledge, skill and expertise of staff. They are well prepared for the move to school.

Children show great pride in being 'brilliant bookworms'. They join in with well-known phrases and listen carefully to a full story. Children show that they can sustain this interest, as they then read the story for themselves. They share the story in their own words, pointing to the pictures as they do so. Across the setting, children enjoy books in different ways at different times. They snuggle up under blankets and share a book with a friend. They enjoy showing books to the inspectors and sneak cosy cuddles with a grown up and with a book in their hands.

As much as children enjoy quiet and calm stories, they also fully immerse themselves in getting active and being creatively physical. They show a sense of freedom and enjoy expressing their responses to music in a way that is joyful and engaging. This is modelled and enjoyed by staff too. Staff use family time to teach specific aspects of music, such as describing the sounds of different instruments. Staff make the most of each second of a young child's short attention span as they extend vocabulary to link sounds to the weather and to consider emotions.

Parental partnership is a strong feature of this nursery. Parents and staff both value this. There are many opportunities for parents to be part of their child's education. Visits to the church, the post office to post a letter and the local shops with a set amount of money to spend all help children to learn about the world around them. Younger children learn the responsibility of looking after a pet as they take a toy pet home for the weekend. All children learn the value of developing good habits as they complete homework activities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

By the end of the inspection, leaders had addressed the gaps in the required checks on staff working at the school. Leaders provide training for staff so that they know how to spot, report and record concerns. Staff understand the importance of putting their training into practice. Although leaders have provided a range of safeguarding training, there are occasional misunderstandings of a few of the key messages, such as who to report concerns about staff to. However, despite this, pupils' safety is not compromised.

The daily routines of care and handover processes keep children safe. Staff are diligent in meeting children's intimate care needs. This includes changing nappies and keeping them safe while they sleep.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have created an effective safeguarding culture in the school. However, their strategic oversight of safeguarding is not robust enough. Leaders do not systematically check the impact of some of their work. This means that they are not always noticing where there are gaps in required information or what needs reviewing and amending. Leaders should thoroughly review their actions and systems so that they can check that what has been put in place is current, effective and meets requirements.

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 November 2012.

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	123970
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10240847
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ann Harvey
Headteacher	Juliet Levingstone
Website	www.bentileenursery.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school provides full- and part-time places for children aged two to four years old. This provision is split between the first half and second half of the week.

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 headteacher and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and expressive arts and design.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with leaders and staff to discuss their plans for children's learning and development. They observed learning both in classrooms and outdoors. They spoke with children and with staff and looked at examples of children's learning.

- Inspectors observed the behaviour of children throughout the day.
- Inspectors met with leaders about the school’s safeguarding procedures. Inspectors reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors spoke to children and staff about children’s safety.
- The lead inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation and improvement plans and information on the school’s website. Governor reports were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted’s surveys of staff’s and parents’ views. Inspectors talked informally with parents at different times during the inspection.

Inspection team

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Jayne Thorpe

Ofsted Inspector

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