

Inspection of Allens Croft Nursery School

Allens Croft Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, West Midlands B14 6RP

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Allens Croft Nursery is a large, well-equipped nursery school at the heart of its community. Staff give children a warm welcome and keep them busy. This helps children to settle in quickly and enjoy attending.

Staff ensure that activities are matched to children's interests. Through a mix of play and focused activities, most children learn well. They make friends and pick up important social skills. Adults speak clearly to children, read lots of stories and encourage plenty of conversation.

As children grow, staff teach them about the importance of taking turns and sharing. They teach them about how their behaviour can affect others and help them to feel good about what they can do. Children respond well to this and behave well. Most of the time, the nursery is a calm place. This helps children to feel safe and secure. There is no evidence of any form of bullying.

Leaders provide plenty of guidance about what staff should do in different situations. However, they have not done enough to check that this guidance is being followed and a few routines have slipped.

Parents and carers hold the nursery in high regard and appreciate the support for families.

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

Lots of good things happen at this nursery school. Each day is packed full of interesting activities and children learn a lot.

Indoors and outside, the school has well-resourced and spacious areas. Typically, staff make good use of the space and equipment to support children's learning, play and development. Attention to children's physical development is a particular strength.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to identify children's different needs. The support that they provide for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly effective. These children are included in all that the school does, and staff provide lots of advice and support for parents.

Two-year-olds are very well supported by staff to settle into the nursery routine. They engage in a range of learning activities that support their care and development. For example, they enjoy adding water to cornflour and seeing it change state. High-quality interactions between staff and children mean that most children achieve well.

Staff use high-quality books to develop children's early reading skills. A focus on rhyme, repetition and song helps children to learn about letters and the sounds they represent. Reading is also used as a route into wider learning. For example, after sharing a book called 'The hungry caterpillar', staff help children explore the lifecycle of the butterfly. They prompt children to observe mini-beasts in the outdoor area and watch a video clip. By drawing and labelling pictures, children are helped to remember their learning.

Children learn to count confidently. For example, when reading 'The three little pigs' story, children count the animals in pictures. This everyday focus on number helps children to develop crucial early mathematical skills.

While planning and assessment 'in the moment' are well judged, longer-term curriculum guidance in some areas of learning is not yet good enough. Although leaders have plans in place to develop the curriculum, the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed this important work.

The nursery provides many opportunities for children's moral, social and cultural development. Recently, children enjoyed learning about the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations and about Diwali. In many cases, learning is based on creative approaches. Through music and art, children learn about the world, one another and themselves.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on nursery life. Leaders prioritised keeping the nursery open, which has meant that some aspects of their work are not as well developed as they would have liked. This has led to variability in the quality of provision, supervision and children's experiences during the day and over time. Leaders' focus has been on ensuring that the school is adequately staffed and managing staff through difficult times. However, their checks on what should be happening have slipped.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff have the training and information they need to keep children safe. Staff record and report any safeguarding concerns to leaders. Leaders make sure that children in need of help get the right support. They work closely with external agencies when necessary.

Leaders ensure that staff undertake appropriate checks before they start working at Allens Croft Nursery School.

Leadership capacity has been stretched during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, oversight of some health and safety issues has not been good enough.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's well-designed systems, policies and routines are not consistently implemented or overseen by leaders. This has led to variability in quality, supervision and children's experiences throughout the day and over time. Leaders should ensure clearer oversight of practice and health and safety routines to ensure consistency of practice.
- Leaders' plans to improve long-term curriculum guidance have been slowed by the disruption caused by COVID-19. This means that staff do not have a clear enough view of long-term ambitions for children's achievements. Leaders should accelerate curriculum developments to ensure that children's learning journeys from start to finish are more widely understood by staff.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	103130
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10211263
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	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sean Delaney
Headteacher	David Aldworth
Website	www.allenscn.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Birmingham Federation of Maintained Nursery Schools.
- The school has a special educational needs resource base for up to six pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 carried out deep dives in communication and language, expressive art and design, and physical development. These included visiting sessions, looking at children's work, examining curriculum guidance and talking with children and staff. They also looked at work from a sample of other areas of learning.
- Inspectors watched reading sessions and children reading independently. They reviewed reading resources.

- The lead inspector looked at a range of documentation on the school’s website.
- Inspectors reviewed the school’s safeguarding arrangements. This included examining the record of employment checks on school staff.
- Inspectors observed children’s behaviour during the day.
- During the inspection, inspectors had formal meetings with the executive principal, head of school, curriculum leaders, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead and governors.
- Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, the pupil survey and the staff survey.

Inspection team

Lorraine Lord, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Martin Pye

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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