

Inspection of a good school: Oliver Thomas Nursery School

Mathews Avenue, East Ham, London E6 6BU

Inspection date:

25 May 2023

Outcome

Oliver Thomas Nursery School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children are safe and very well cared for. They arrive at school with smiles on their faces and friendly greetings for their friends. Children separate easily from their parents and carers. They are keen to find out what exciting things are happening each day. Staff are kind and nurturing. They work brilliantly with parents to help children settle in and find their feet.

Everyone that works in the school is ambitious for what children can achieve. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are particularly well supported. The school's inclusive and welcoming ethos helps each child to feel valued and heard. Over their time at the school, children come on in leaps and bounds. They achieve highly.

Children's behaviour is excellent. Staff enable children to become confident and independent. Children love looking after Onion and Poptail, the school's guinea pigs. They know how to be gentle and give them space to play. Children show kindness to each other. They learn how to get along with other children and make good friendships. For example, the two-year-old children really like their special circle times together. They wait for their turn to shake the tambourine and welcome each other to the circle with a song and some actions.

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

Leaders, governors and staff have worked together to create an ambitious curriculum that allows each child to flourish. Staff share leaders' high expectations. Everyone is focused on making sure that children get the very best start to their education.

Staff get to know children very well. They use their expert knowledge of how young children learn and develop to give each child what they need to succeed. When the time comes, children are ready for the move to primary school.

A central part of the curriculum is the list of 'twenty things'. These are valuable and magical experiences that staff make sure that all children enjoy before they leave school. For example, children all get to plant a seed, build a den and experience what it feels like to hold a snail. Staff use these and all other opportunities to extend children's learning, especially their language. For example, as children watched the snails move along the tray, they used words, such as 'antennae' and 'spiral', to describe what they could see through the magnifying glasses. They compared the sizes of snails and used books to find out if snails had bones like humans.

Leaders place great emphasis on children's early literacy development. Right from the start, staff help children to listen and hear sounds around them. When they are ready, children start to listen out for the sounds in words and sentences, including during routines. For example, children listen for the sounds in the words 'coats' and 'bags' at home time. Children experience a wide range of stories, songs and rhymes. They get to know these very well. For example, the two-year-olds clapped excitedly when the teacher got to their favourite part of the rhyme. Older children retold familiar stories using props and dressing-up clothes.

Staff are skilled at supporting all children to communicate. Some children need more help than others, particularly those with SEND. Staff know exactly how to adapt the things they do in order to meet children's unique needs. For example, staff encouraged children to use picture cards to help them choose between two different toys. At the 'pebble pit', staff used single words for some children, such as 'fast, high' and 'low' as they watched the pebbles roll down the drainpipes.

Staff know how to extend children's ideas and encourage their imaginations. For example, children quickly stepped in to save the day when the water tray sprung a leak. They carried buckets to and from the water pump, showing great perseverance. Meanwhile, other children created houses from planks, crates and blocks. They responded well to the challenge of finding out how many children could fit inside the house. Staff provide thoughtful opportunities to support children's mathematics knowledge. For example, children moved the plastic ducks on and off the 'log' into the water as part of a number song. Children remembered words such as 'full' and 'empty' as they filled different containers with sand and water.

Children play happily together. They learn about the world around them, including about different people and places. They plant vegetables and flowers and watch them grow. Children enjoyed using watercolours to capture the different flowers in their hanging baskets. Staff promote children's physical health and development very effectively. Outside in the 'beach' area, children liked copying the staff as they rolled across the sand in different ways.

Leaders and governors take seriously everyone's mental health and well-being. Staff feel very well supported by leaders, both personally and in their day-to-day work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all the required staff suitability checks are undertaken. They make sure that staff are trained to identify any concerns about children's welfare. Staff understand how to report concerns. Leaders respond to these swiftly and effectively.

Leaders work closely with a range of professionals, including the children's centre team. Together, they make sure that families have the help they need.

Children are taught to play safely but also to take risks. For example, at the woodwork bench, children know why goggles are important. They understand how to use the hammer and nails sensibly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 good in July 2013.

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	102706
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	10240582
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	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julie-Anne Nicholls
Headteacher	Lorna Prynne
Website	www.oliverthomas.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up her post in September 2021.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative providers.

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, assistant headteacher and two members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and language, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited all classes, spoke to staff and looked at children's special profile books. Inspectors also looked at provision for early literacy and children's physical development.

- Inspectors met with parents at the start and end of the day. Inspectors met with a range of staff to discuss children’s learning and development. Inspectors reviewed the responses to the staff survey and the contributions to Ofsted Parent View.
- The lead inspector checked the single central record of staff suitability checks. He met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and sampled safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors joined children as they played. They spoke informally with children throughout the day.

Inspection team

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dawn Titus

Ofsted Inspector

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