



Thorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY243072
Inspection date	21 September 2006
Inspector	Permjit Tanda
Setting Address	Thorns Road, Brierley Hill, West Midlands, DY5 2JY
Telephone number	01384 818285
E-mail	
Registered person	Thorns Playgroup Committee
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Thorns Pre-School opened in 1989 and operates from a self-contained mobile building within the grounds of Thorns Primary School, in Brierley Hill, West Midlands. There are local shops, a park and library within walking distance. The group have use of an enclosed play area and also have shared use of the school's play areas, field and computer suite.

There are currently 28 children, from two to four years, on roll. This includes one funded four-year-old and 23 funded three-year-olds. Children attend morning or afternoon sessions. There are currently no children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or with English as an additional language attending, however there is an effective system in place to offer appropriate support.

The pre-school is open five mornings a week from 08:45 to 11:15 and three afternoons from 12:30 to 15:00 during school term time.

The group employs eight staff of whom six hold an appropriate childcare qualification. They receive support from the local authority worker.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow current and appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines, policies and procedures. The good adult support and guidance helps children gain an understanding of hygiene and they become increasingly independent in their personal care. As part of the daily routine children learn about the importance of hand washing.

Children have access to physical activity daily and benefit from the use of wheeled toys, rockers and climbing equipment. Children develop control and co-ordination through the use of small equipment such as hoops, bats and balls. Staff work well with children to explore, test and develop the children's physical control. Children develop a positive attitude towards physical exercise and learn to recognise the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active, for example, they move their bodies imaginatively to their favourite music and take part in indoor fun exercise sessions.

Children independently access fresh drinking water throughout the session. They benefit from a healthy and nutritious snack consisting of a good range of fresh fruit and vegetables and a drink of milk daily. Children's special dietary requirements and preferences are catered for through staff who are vigilant and who take heed of information provided by parents.

The routine includes opportunity for children to be active and have a quiet time for rest.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Risks of accidental injury to children are minimised because staff are vigilant and supervise the children well. They use detailed risk assessments to reduce potential hazards in the environment. Children are able to move safely and freely around the nursery and outdoors. However a thorough risk assessment has not been conducted on children leaving the building to meet their parents at the end of the session, hence potential hazards have not been successfully addressed.

Children freely use good quality equipment appropriate to their age and stage of development. All resources and equipment are checked and monitored regularly for safety.

Children are protected by staff who all have a good understanding of child protection policies and give priority to children's welfare. All the required policies and procedures for the safe management of the setting are in place and regularly updated.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

All children arrive happy and eager to participate. Children make appropriate use of what is available because the environment is welcoming and resources are readily accessible to children. Children confidently self-select from the range of activities and play opportunities provided, for example, some children mould, roll and cut dough then move on to play in the castle. Staff build positive relationships with the children by supporting them and talking to them about what they are doing.

Children make steady progress because staff ensure they provide a varied range of play experiences covering all areas of development. Children under three years benefit from the same educational programme provided for the older children. Staff observe and record what children do and use some of the information to help them plan the next steps of learning. However, as staff are not familiar with the 'Birth to Three Matters' framework the current developmental assessment being used for children under three years is not appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Close and caring relationships increase children's sense of trust and help them develop a strong sense of self.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children show appropriate levels of concentration and are interested in a varied range of stimulating activities. They access an appropriate range of resources, which support their learning. Children show an interest in what they do and are self-assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They learn to sit quietly during circle time for example; they sit patiently and wait their turn to look at what is in the box. Children show an interest in books and stories. Whole group story times and singing sessions sometimes lack challenge for the more able, for example, a member of staff sits with the children and sings familiar nursery rhymes, but whilst younger children are motivated, the older children do not show good levels of interest.

Children enjoy writing during play and readily make marks on paper whilst pretending to take an order of food in the role play area. Older children have some opportunity to learn to write their own names and they are exposed to written labels within their environment and therefore begin to understand that print carries meaning. They have the opportunity to use foam letters, magnetic letters and the chalk board on the wall at their own leisure, however children show little interest in them and staff do not always effectively reinforce learning. The letter of the week means children have some opportunity to learn to recognise letters of the alphabet, however more able children have few daily opportunities to link sounds to letters of the alphabet. Children learn to recognise their names through self-registration and the use of name cards. Children have daily opportunities to paint, draw, mould dough and make collage using a range of arts and craft materials to create their own work. Children use their imagination through dance, music, design and role play. They make good use of the space and props made available to support their play. For example, children have recently been involved in creating a treasure

island, making a pirate ship, finding treasure and have thoroughly enjoyed dressing up as pirates.

Children gain confidence in counting during daily situations such as, counting cups at snack time and respond enthusiastically during number rhymes. Children begin to use mathematical vocabulary such as big and small. Opportunities to extend their skills in early calculation and problem solving through daily routines are less well planned. Their physical skills develop and improve through a variety of experiences, including dance and movement. Children handle tools and objects, and they build and construct by assembling and joining materials. Children begin to explore and investigate but opportunities to further question why things happen are not always well planned. For example, the sand tray is small and does not offer the scope for children to explore and manipulate equipment. Children have few opportunities to use water to explore and investigate.

The educational programme is delivered by all the staff at the pre-school, however all staff do not have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and this impacts on the quality of teaching and learning. The planning system ensures all areas of learning are covered consistently which means overall staff plan a satisfactory range of activities which help children made steady progress. Staff spend much of their time interacting with the children, however, sometimes they fail to recognise the learning potential of activities and the learning intention is not always clear. Teaching does not always take account of children's different attainments and staff do not always successfully challenge children through questioning to make them think. This especially impacts on how well children are challenged in the areas of communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Staff provide an inviting environment that is well organised to help children become independent. They use effective systems to observe, monitor and record children's achievements and are in the early stages of planning experiences that help children take the next step in their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All children are welcomed and are given the opportunity to take part in the session. Staff value and respect their individuality and children learn to understand that they can expect others to treat their cultures and beliefs with respect. Children have access to a varied range of positive image resources and play materials and take part in celebrating various festivals which ensures they learn about diversity. They gain a sense of the world through imaginative play and have been involved in pretending to sail to many countries around the world.

Staff are able to adapt the environment and activities to meet the needs of children with special needs. There are appropriate systems in place to support children who speak English as an additional language.

Children's behaviour is good. Staff support children in sharing and turn taking through the use of sand timers, this helps children understand values and codes of behaviour. Children respond well to gentle reminders to care for the environment, the resources and for each other. Staff set consistent boundaries for the children, which helps them learn to negotiate with others and

take responsibility for their own behaviour. Children learn to understand right and wrong in a positive environment where staff build on good behaviour through praise and reward.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children's needs are met because staff actively seek parent's views about their children's needs and interests before the child starts at the setting. Staff ensure that all parents know how their children are progressing and developing through regular parents' meetings and personal progress books. Children benefit from the involvement of their parents in projects, which contributes to their well-being at the pre-school.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management is good. They have a commitment to building on the good practice in care and a vision to improve the education for all children through staff training. Staff are clear about their roles and work well together as a team. Qualified staff support unqualified staff and act as role models to improve the level of teaching.

Recently the pre-school has undergone many major changes, for example the mobile class room has moved and been re-furnished, therefore the environment is new to the staff and children. Changes include the organisation of resources, play materials and storage and a change to how staff work with the children. The vision has been led by the Local Authority worker in conjunction with the person in charge. They are still in the early stages of working with the changes to see how effective they have been in promoting children's learning.

All legally required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place and is regularly reviewed.

Children benefit from a committed staff team who are effectively inducted and supervised. Staff are deployed appropriately meeting the individual needs of children. There is a commitment from the whole staff team to continuous improvement and development. They regularly reflect, monitor and improve the quality of their care. The good quality of the provision means that overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection two recommendations were made to improve the care of children. The setting has successfully addressed the recommendations. The named deputy holds an appropriate level 3 childcare qualification and there is a written procedure in the event of a child being lost or uncollected, which is understood by all staff members. Therefore the children's welfare and safety has improved in these areas.

Three recommendations were made to improve the quality of the education provided, however some of the recommendations have recently been addressed and others partially met therefore little improvement has been made.

The re-organisation of resources means children have the opportunity to self-select activities, however because this has been a recent change children are not familiar with their environment.

Staff have introduced opportunities for children to increase their awareness of linking sounds to letters of the alphabet through using flash cards three times a week and by introducing the letter of the week. However more able children still have few opportunities to experience this through every day routine. Resources in some areas have been increased, for example, the creation of an office environment encourages children to explore key boards and telephones. However in the sand and water children have few opportunity to experience basic scientific and mathematical concepts.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider of Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- consider the arrangements made for children, when leaving the session, to ensure they can meet their parents safely
- consider the use of the 'Birth to Three Matters' framework so that children's development is monitored effectively.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- increase the staff's knowledge of the 'Foundation Stage' to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- ensure the learning intention of activities is clear and that the children's learning is extended

- effectively challenge the more able children, paying particular attention to the areas of communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk