



## Thornton Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	226495
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 September 2006
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<b>Setting Address</b>	Community Centre, Main Street, Thornton, Coalville, Leicestershire, LE67 1AG
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<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 satisfactory. 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?

Thornton Playgroup opened in 1970 and current leadership was established in 1996. It operates from two rooms within the Community Centre in Thornton serving the local and surrounding village communities.

There are currently 28 children from two to five years on roll. Of these 17 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions and there are currently no children with special educational needs or who speak English as a second language.

The group opens five days a week during school term-time from 09:15 to 11:45.

There are three full-time staff and one part-time member of staff who works with the children. Two of the staff hold Nursery Nurse Examination Board (NNEB) certificates and one has an

early years qualification to NVQ level two. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Leicestershire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children begin to develop good hygiene skills as they wash their hands after using the toilet and use tissues to blow their nose. Their hygiene is further enhanced through the provision of liquid soap and paper towels for hand drying in the toilet area. However, the chances of cross-infection are heightened at snack time as they wash their hands in a bowl of water and share a towel with others. Staff follow clear health and safety policies and procedures including the use of appropriate cleaning products on all surfaces, to prevent the spread of infection. Children's health and welfare is maintained as staff record all information on their medical needs and accidents that occur. All staff have first aid qualifications enabling them to react appropriately if the need arises.

Children's physical abilities develop suitably as they access a range of equipment to develop both their small and large muscle movements. For example, children were observed to use scissors and glue sticks with confidence and climb up steps using alternate feet as they access the climbing frame on the adjacent park. Photographic evidence shows how funded children have opportunities to move their bodies for a purpose when they have a physical education session once a week. However, more able children are not always challenged effectively or on a regular basis to develop their large muscle skills further. Staff talk to the children about the importance of exercise and the effect it has on their bodies, for example, as they feel their heartbeat before exercise and after. This develops the children's knowledge how the heart reacts to exercise.

Children's awareness of healthy eating develops as staff introduce topics and activities that promote this area. For example, when exploring an 'around the world' topic, children tasted various foods such as noodles and couscous and staff spoke about how these were healthy. Children access a snack bar during the session at which they are able to independently pour their own drinks. They have a choice of milk or water, and a biscuit. There are times that the food is altered to ensure that children are offered healthy alternatives. Children do not have independent opportunities to remain hydrated throughout the session. There is no provision of fresh drinking water laid out for them; children have to ask if they require a drink. This may impact on children's health.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children arrive and settle well in the large, spacious hall where they are able to easily access a range of age and stage appropriate resources. Very good systems are in place for the safe arrival and departure of children. A member of staff stands at the entrance to welcome children and sign them in and at the end of the session children are escorted to their parents individually, ensuring that children remain protected at all times. Children's safety is further protected, as

staff remain vigilant about their welfare at all times. For example, when walking over to the adjacent park staff counted all the children out of the building, when they got to the park, on leaving and as they returned to the building.

Children move confidently around the playgroup. They use a range of child-sized furniture that is suitably arranged enabling them to move freely and safely as they access play resources and activities. Appropriate fire safety equipment is available and checked annually. Relevant policies and procedures are in place ensuring that children's safety is maintained. However, the policy regarding the fire drill is not consistently practised; some children do not take part in the procedure on a regular basis which impacts on their safety and understanding of what to do in an emergency.

Children's welfare is maintained as staff are clear about current child protection legislation and have relevant procedures in place to follow should the need arise. A policy is in place ensuring all are fully informed of protecting children from harm.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled within the secure and welcoming environment. They participate in a range of activities that promote their age and stage of development well. They are able to move freely between a planned range of activities, both child-initiated and adult-led. They also access a quiet room for small group activities that are linked to individual areas of learning. Staff are beginning to implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework and understand how to meet the children's needs through this. Children feel a sense of belonging and begin to find a voice as staff listen to them and give them time to respond.

Children are confident and relate warmly to positive staff interaction, which impacts on their learning in a positive way. For example, children were observed to mark make in coloured sand; staff at this activity offered encouraging words of support and gave good explanation of what they could do. This led to the children persisting for an extended period. Children have independent access to the toys and resources during play, promoting their decision-making skills. Children's relationships build well as staff give them time to work together which promotes their confidence and self-esteem. For example, children in the role-play area work together in assisting each other to put the clothes on and in 'making dinner'. Children show a good understanding of what is 'right and wrong' and develop their sense of belonging as they remind each other daily of the rules for working harmoniously.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage is secure and they use a variety of methods to ensure that all children will make good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff work well as a team and meet on a regular basis to discuss the progress that children make. Planning includes a range of interesting topics and activities. It encompasses all areas of learning and all staff input into this ensuring that they have ownership and understand the stepping-stones. Focused activities are used daily to ensure that children make steady progress. Observations are completed and are used to inform children's

assessments. However, the written plans are confusing and do not specifically link to one aspect of learning or target individual children. This leads to gaps in children's learning and means that there are times that children are not challenged effectively. Evaluations are not consistently completed on activities, which impacts on future planning.

Children feel a sense of belonging as they quickly leave parents and carers and settle into the pre-school environment. They greet each other, and staff, by name and soon become engrossed in the activities available. Further to this, children develop their confidence as they call out a response at registration time and take time to listen to their peers. They are confident and most children persevere at self-chosen activities for extended periods. Children's communication skills develop well as staff give them time to respond to questions and encourage them to think. For example, staff were talking to the children about seeds that they had planted and asked "can you remember what we planted" and "what's happened to the seeds". Children enjoy books and understand that print carries meaning. They hold books appropriately and turn pages from left to right. Opportunities to consolidate what they have learnt develops well using a range of books. For example, the current theme is 'Underground' and children access many books on animals that live underground and about planting seeds. Children enjoy practising their mark making skills as they scribe in notebooks and enjoy 'writing' in coloured sand. More able children recognise initial sounds and letters as they look for their name when they enter the setting. However, they are not always challenged effectively which leads to missed opportunities at times.

Children show an interest in number and more able children confidently use numbers in their play. For example an older three-year-old was observed in the home corner counting up to six as she played with a selection of implements that were laid out. Children eagerly assist staff in counting how many children are present each day and more able children identify the numerical form, which is displayed. Children show a sound awareness of size and quantity in a range of planned activities. For example, children making junk models were talking about 'big' and 'small' as they chose from a range of boxes, as well as recognising that these were 'rectangle' in shape. Staff missed opportunities to extend children's knowledge of shape further though, as they did not introduce it in three dimensional form. Children enthusiastically become involved in activities that develop their understanding of the world in which they live and their locality, as they look at a wide range of festivals such as Ramadan and Chinese New Year. Further to this, children receive visits from people in the locality such as farmers and fire fighters to develop their sense of community. Their computer skills develop appropriately, as they use a mouse to operate simple programmes. They extend their technology skills as they use a range of battery operated equipment. Children are able to observe the growth of things and take great interest in the developing environment as they explore nature and how it changes through the seasons.

Children's small muscle skills develop as they expertly use a range of implements such as glue sticks and paint brushes in adult-led activities. In addition to this, they enjoy manipulating puzzle pieces into the desired shape and threading activities also. Children extend their awareness of healthy practices as they talk about their heart rate before and after exercise, and participate in a range of adult-led activities such as tasting healthy foods. Children can run, hop and use alternating feet to climb steps. However, staff miss opportunities to further develop children's large physical skills, as they do not plan effectively or consistently for all children. Children thoroughly enjoy a range of craft activities such as painting, sticking and junk modelling. They

use their imagination well and staff extend their ideas as they create varied role play areas, such as a clothes shop and travel agents. Children explore their senses as they use the dough, sand and shaving foam. However, staff do not always plan effectively for children to listen to a range of music, which limits their ability to explore different sounds and movement.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's sense of belonging increases as they are warmly welcomed into the caring environment. They feel valued at the setting as staff work to support their individual needs and provide an inclusive environment. Staff have experience of caring for children with learning difficulties and disabilities and recognises the importance of working with parents and outside agencies, ensuring that the best care and attention is provided.

Children's awareness of the world they live is enhanced by visits from people in the community, trips into the locality and through the exploration of varied festivals, such as Hanukah and Diwali. All children take delight in dressing up, and staff ensure that they feel able to wear what they want to, irrespective of gender. For example, three boys were observed to put dresses on and push dolls in prams around the setting. This promotes and enhances children's individuality and choice. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's behaviour is good. They are beginning to understand right from wrong, through consistent boundaries and praise from staff. Children show care and concern for one another and begin to take an interest and listen to what others say. They enjoy the routines that are in place. Children particularly enjoy carpet time in which they listen to staff informing them about the day ahead, talk about the weather and remind each other of the rules in place, such as 'putting hands up to talk, sharing and being kind'. More able children were observed to remind younger children of these. For example, during carpet time a child was observed to shout out a response, the older child stated "you have to put your hand up".

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents are greeted warmly and staff take time to listen to any concerns that they may have. Children's needs are identified through discussion with parents before their child begins at the setting to ensure that staff can meet their needs appropriately. Parents have opportunities to learn about their child's progress and routines at the setting, through a yearly meeting, termly newsletter and informal discussion. However, there are few formal opportunities for parents to be regularly involved in their child's learning or comment on their progress. Information on the current curriculum is displayed on the parents' notice board, although this is not easy to follow and does not accurately pin point what children do from day to day.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the welcoming environment where space is organised appropriately to meet their individual needs. Suitable systems are in place to ensure staff are cleared and qualified to carry out their childcare responsibilities. Staffing ratios are maintained appropriately thus

ensuring that children receive individual attention at times as well as having opportunities to work unsupported. Necessary contact and personal details are maintained so staff can meet children's individual health, care and dietary needs. Relevant policies and procedures are used appropriately to support children's well-being.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. All staff input into the planning to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities and meet regularly to discuss how this impacts on the children. Staff have some opportunities to attend training sessions to develop their skills although these are few. Appraisals are not in place to support staff, which impacts on their personal development. A development plan is in place identifying priorities for the pre-school as a whole and staff have taken steps to improve on their practice. However, systems to monitor and evaluate the provision for nursery education are not sufficiently robust as the planning is not clearly identifying what staff want children to learn or how to challenge them effectively.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last Children Act inspection the group were required to: ensure staff are deployed effectively within the premises to ensure the safety, welfare and development of children; ensure staff talk with children about what they are doing and have high expectations of what they can achieve and ensure staff are deployed to support children's play and learning; ensure resources actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children; ensure adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development and to establish a statement of procedure to be followed should a parent fail to collect a child or a child is lost.

A procedure has been established outlining what would occur should a child become lost or a parent fail to collect a child. This is available on site ensuring that children's welfare is maintained. Children's safety, welfare and development is promoted well as staff are deployed effectively to enable them to offer appropriate support as needed. Staff talk to the children and use good questioning techniques to help them achieve to the best of their abilities in the main. Children have good opportunities to explore a range of resources and activities to promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, and staff have implemented a policy regarding anti-bias practice to ensure that the needs of all children can be met. Children behave well as staff ensure that they remain occupied and busy at the setting and diffuse any unwanted behaviour as soon as it arises. Rules for working together have been established and children remind each other of these at carpet time. This promotes their sense of belonging and self-worth.

Nursery education.

At the last inspection, the quality of the nursery education was judged as significantly weak. The pre-school were asked to improve planning so that the learning intentions for activities are clear and linked to the stepping stones, which provide more regular, effective opportunities for children's development in all six areas of learning. Use assessment to plan what each child could usefully do next to ensure that children are challenged at an appropriate level to their

developmental needs and link this with the curriculum planning, to ensure that staff deployment is organised to provide support to group activities. Make use of smaller, age/ability related groups in order to ensure that these activities are more effective learning experiences for the children, improve children's communication language and literacy development by planning and providing regular opportunities within their play to ascribe meaning to marks, to practise meaningful writing and to develop their awareness and understanding that print has meaning, and improve children's personal, social and emotional development by providing more opportunities for them to increase their levels of independence and for them to develop their behaviour and self control. Support children's behaviour by consistent intervention by staff so that children are made clearly aware of any boundaries and of adult expectations and that they begin to consider the consequences of their actions.

Staff have developed their skills in managing children's behaviour. They ensure that any unwanted behaviour is dealt with immediately in a calm and consistent manner ensuring that children recognise the appropriate way to behave and work together harmoniously. Rules have been established and children remind each other of these each day. Children have many opportunities to develop their independence skills which increases their confidence and self-esteem. Staff are deployed effectively at the setting and provide opportunities for all age groups to work in small groups and age/ability to groups to ensure that they can identify each child's learning needs and abilities. Children's communication, language and literacy skills are developing well. They have opportunities to recognise print in books and name cards. Staff provide opportunities for children to mark make in role play areas and other activities to ensure that children can practice their skills. Children are making progress through the stepping stones towards the Foundation Stage curriculum as staff have a sound understanding of this. However, the current planning system is very complex and does not clearly identify what staff want children to learn or how they will ensure that children are challenged effectively. Observations and assessments are used to plot children's progress but staff do not use this information to inform future planning or target individual children which impacts on some children's learning.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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 satisfactory. 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):

- ensure children's good health is maintained by provided appropriate hand washing facilities before snack time and ensure that children have access to fresh drinking water throughout the session
- develop children's awareness of safety by ensuring that all have regular opportunities to be involved in the fire evacuation process
- ensure that the information available to parents and carers regarding what children are learning, is clear and relevant to the daily planning systems and the current curriculum.

### **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):

- make more effective use of the observations, assessments and planning systems to ensure the individual learning needs of each child are supported. Ensure the next steps in learning are clearly linked with assessments and these are used by all staff to guide their teaching and offer appropriate challenge
- develop the current planning system to ensure that focused activities offer a clear learning intention to ensure that children make steady progress and that these are evaluated and used to inform future plans
- ensure that an appraisal system is implemented for staff to ensure that their professional development is promoted effectively.

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