



St Thomas Methodist Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	106042
Inspection date	05 December 2006
Inspector	Anne Legge
Setting Address	St Thomas Methodist Church Hall, Cowick Street, Exeter, Devon, EX4 1JE
Telephone number	07896 286 830
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Registered person	St Thomas Methodist Pre School 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Thomas Methodist Pre-school provides sessional care for up to 24 children, aged from three to five years. It is managed by a voluntary committee and was first registered in its current setting in 1993. The pre-school is open during term time from 09:30 to 12:00 every weekday morning, and is followed by a lunch club from 12:00 to 13:00. There are 29 children on the register, including 25 funded three and four year olds. Six child care staff and an administrator are employed. Four staff have appropriate child care qualifications.

The pre-school operates in ground floor rooms of St Thomas Methodist Church, in a busy residential area of Exeter close to shops, parks, and schools. The group has exclusive use of two interconnecting playrooms during sessions. Toilet facilities are close to the playrooms and there is a separate kitchen. There is an enclosed outdoor play area at the side and rear of the building. The pre-school welcomes and supports children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The Pre-school Learning Alliance and the Local Authority provide advice and support to the staff and committee.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from eating healthy snacks and meals. They enjoy fruit and savoury biscuits at snack time and eat well-balanced lunches, supplied by parents. Staff work closely with parents and children, to ensure that packed meals are nutritious and that treats are only consumed after healthier items. Children have plenty of fluids, as drinking water is always available and milk and water are supplied at snack time. Special dietary needs are carefully recorded and consistently met. Children have daily opportunities to be physically active. They use their second room to build with large bricks, climb, balance and crawl through tunnels. They also enjoy parachute games and moving to music. They sometimes use the outdoor area for ball games and obstacle courses.

Children's care is mainly consistent, when they are unwell or injured. Four staff have current first aid qualifications and records of accidents are comprehensive. Medication records are detailed, but they are not always shared appropriately with parents, after administration. Children are usually well protected from infection. The premises are very clean, as staff and the owners of the building ensure that good systems are in place to regularly clean all rooms and facilities. Staff carefully disinfect surfaces, especially before food is served. Children learn good hygiene routines, washing their hands appropriately. They use liquid soap and paper towels, but a shared bowl used for hand washing before lunch increases the risk of spreading infection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in safe and secure premises. Their security is assured, as the doors are locked during sessions and staff accompany them to the toilets, which are in a shared area of the building. There are very good systems for the collection of children, which effectively protect them from harm. Staff have a good understanding of all safety issues and regularly risk assess the premises and the outdoor areas. The garden has been put out of use temporarily, as hazards have been noted, concerning the fence. Socket covers and fire guards are used appropriately, to keep children safe.

Children have access to a very good range of toys and resources, which are suitable for their ages and maintained in good condition. Play materials are displayed at low levels, so that children can select freely and safely. Children learn to be aware of their own safety, as staff regularly explain, for example, why they should not run in the main play room, or be careless with scissors. Children are safe in emergencies, as they regularly practice evacuation procedures. They are very well protected from abuse or neglect, as staff have undertaken appropriate training and have a detailed understanding of all child protection issues and procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy attending the pre-school, where they engage in a wide variety of interesting activities, which successfully promote their development. Sessions are carefully organised, to include a good balance of free play and structured tasks. The group places a strong emphasis on developing children's social skills, and staff are very effective in helping them to relate well to each other and respond to the pre-school's clear routines and expectations.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and consistently challenge or support children in their learning. They use questions and discussion effectively, to help children develop their thinking skills and language. They plan a wide range of themes and activities, covering the whole curriculum. Staff observe children's achievements and track their progress towards the early learning goals, using this information to set appropriate targets and plan for the next steps in their development.

Children have many opportunities to make marks, and older children begin to write their names. They talk confidently and regularly discuss letter shapes and sounds. They enjoy story times and sometimes share books before their snack, but they do not have constant access to a book area, so are unable to share texts spontaneously, during sessions. Children count in a wide variety of practical tasks, such as counting toy bears or children present at registration. Adults are effective in helping children to understand number patterns, by comparing groups of objects or discussing one more or less. However, children have limited access to numerals, so do not always make the links between counting and written numbers. They discuss and recognise shapes and use mathematical language in their play, such as when using a balance to compare heavy and light objects.

Children develop a good sense of time, as they discuss events in their lives and days of the week. They make models with a good variety of construction equipment, and develop their understanding of technology, as they use a computer or the toy telephone and vacuum cleaner. Children explore a very good range of materials, such as soil, cones and leaves, or jelly and ice. They create freely, mixing paint or using large-scale drawing resources, and enjoy making calendars or decorations for the Christmas tree, using excellent collage materials. The Children sing familiar songs and develop lively imaginations in role play, which is effectively extended by staff, as they, for example, assist in a play hospital or join children on an imaginary train journey. Children develop increasing control in their use of small equipment, such as pens, scissors and brushes. They have opportunities to crawl, balance and move to music indoors, but able children are not consistently challenged in their physical development, due to the limited use made of outdoor play areas, for large physical activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The pre-school has an excellent ethos of inclusion. All children and families are welcomed and staff work hard to ensure that individual needs are met. For example, children are helped to

understand and communicate, by the regular use of pictures and signing, to illustrate the daily routine. Songs are used to mark changes in activities, such as tidying up or moving to another room. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They learn about differences, as they celebrate a range of festivals, such as Diwali and Christmas, or use multi-cultural resources, including dolls, books and puzzles. They are constantly reminded to consider the feelings of others, as staff carefully explain why they should share resources or wait their turn to speak at circle time. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are exceptionally well monitored and supported. Staff work together very effectively, to provide excellent encouragement and to promote integration and very good progress.

Children develop very warm relationships with staff and enjoy extensive praise and rewards, such as stickers, when they behave well. Staff are completely consistent in their commitment to helping all children to understand and achieve the high expectations for their behaviour within the group. They use very effective strategies, such as showing pictures to represent good listening or good sitting, and constantly reminding those who struggle to succeed, while praising children who comply. They work intensively with individual children, who need extra support in managing their behaviour, consistently achieving excellent results.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Children enjoy extremely consistent care, due to the pre-school's excellent systems for communicating with their parents. Staff provide detailed information about the curriculum in regular newsletters and on notice boards, and they issue termly reports about children's progress towards the early learning goals. Key workers meet regularly with parents, to share records of children's achievements, which are clearly documented, and to discuss targets for future development, so that carers can fully support their child's progress. There are comprehensive induction systems for new parents, including visits to the pre-school and discussions with staff about policies and procedures. Staff spend time at the end of sessions, ensuring that parents are very well informed about all aspects of their child's care and development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by well qualified staff, who are committed to providing good quality care and education. They benefit from high adult ratios, which enable children to receive plenty of individual attention. Staff are very well deployed to promote children's development, as they engage in the wide range of activities available at each session. Space is used very effectively, to offer a rich variety of play experiences, which are carefully planned, to meet children's individual learning needs. Staff provide a safe and comfortable environment for children, using displays and resources, to make the rooms child-friendly and interesting. The pre-school meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management are good. There are effective systems for monitoring the quality of the nursery education provided, including regular staff appraisals and the identification of staff training needs. Staff and the committee work together, to ensure that standards are high, and staff meet regularly to plan future provision. All activities and themes are evaluated and staff are very reflective in their practice, always seeking to improve. Children's care and education are supported by all the required documentation, although some policies and procedures have

not been updated to include all the necessary details. The child protection policy and complaints procedures are incomplete, and records of medication administered are not signed by parents after administration.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the pre-school has improved children's safety by ensuring that the temperature of the heating system is carefully controlled. Staff have undertaken training and have worked hard to achieve consistent and positive behaviour management, which helps children to learn good strategies for managing their own behaviour.

At the last inspection, the Nursery Education was judged to have significant weaknesses. Since then, staff have successfully developed their understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They now plan a wide variety of play experiences for children, and interact skilfully with them, enabling them to make good progress towards the early learning goals. Learning intentions are clearly identified, so that all adults are able to support children's development effectively. Children's progress in counting, calculation and understanding shapes is now well promoted, through a range of practical tasks and daily routines. They make good progress in their understanding of letters sounds and shapes, and have daily opportunities to make marks and begin to write. Children have better access to books and stories, although this is not yet consistent, throughout sessions.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 there have been no complaints to Ofsted that required the provider or 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.

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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):

- further protect children from infection by improving arrangements for washing hands before lunch

- make sure that children's care is always underpinned by current and comprehensive documentation, including up-to-date complaints procedures, child protection policy and records of medication administered, which are shared appropriately with parents.

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):

- provide more opportunities for children to recognise numerals, access books and share stories, throughout sessions, and make sure that able children are consistently challenged in their physical development.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk