



## St Thomas's Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY331699
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 October 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Jill Dawn Butler
<b>Setting Address</b>	St Thomas's Church Hall, Church Road, Noak Hill, Romford, Essex, RM4 1LD
<b>Telephone number</b>	07791 358590
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Mrs Linda Hayter and Mrs Jacqueline West
<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?

St Thomas's pre-school is one of two pre-school provisions run by a private partnership organisation. It opened in 2006 and operates from one group room on the ground floor in a self-contained building to the rear of St. Thomas's Church. It is situated in Noak Hill, Romford in the London borough of Havering in a semi-rural residential area.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. It is open each weekday with the exception of Thursdays from 09:30 to 12:00 term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 12 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these four children are receiving funding for nursery education. Children come from a local catchment area. The pre-school currently supports one child with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre-school employs three staff. All of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are developing a good understanding of how to follow effective personal hygiene routines. They know, for example, to wash their hands before snack times and after undertaking arts and crafts activities. They are assisted in this process through being able to gain easy access to the portable running water facility provided within the playroom. Practitioners consistently promote good hygiene procedures and reinforce children's learning in this area.

Children's good health is well promoted by the provision's sickness policies and procedures. Children can expect to be treated appropriately in an emergency and if they have an accident. An adequately stocked first aid box is easily accessible, and all practitioners have current first aid qualifications. Accident records are completed with parent's signatures and confidentiality maintained. All required consents are in place, which enables practitioners to respond to situations effectively and promptly.

Children engage in a range of physical activities. The daily routine incorporates a session specifically to promote children's physical development. They can use the outdoors play area as well as the playroom, which is cleared for this purpose. Equipment is varied each day, and includes hoops to jump through, bean bags to throw, a trampoline, various wheeled vehicles and a climbing frame.

Children eat a snack which consists of a good range of healthy eating options and choices. Their attention is drawn to the displayed colourful menu, and they always have access to fresh and dried fruit, as well as a choice of drinks. Individual children's dietary requirements are known and effectively adhered to. Children sit in small groups when eating the snack. They happily chat, and these times present opportunities for them to extend their social development. Throughout the session they can help themselves to water which they can drink when they feel thirsty.

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

The provision is good.

Children are able to move around safely, freely and independently. They pursue activities in a well organised, bright and welcoming environment and negotiate the different play areas well. Children are kept fully secure when they utilize both the indoors and outdoors areas.

Safety checks on the premises, furniture and equipment are undertaken prior to sessions, and risk assessment audits are undertaken and recorded by the designated practitioner. Children can gain safe and easy access to the play and learning resources and activities. When eating their snack and pursuing some activities they sit comfortably at the small tables and at other times they utilize mats and floor cushions.

Practitioners provide effective supervision, and demonstrate clear and consistent boundaries to help children learn about rules to keep them safe, for example, they need to tidy away toys to prevent children tripping over them. Children are consistently encouraged by practitioners to take care of their own personal safety and that of others. Children are well protected in the event of a fire. Fire drills are regularly undertaken, and all relevant signage and fire fighting equipment is in place.

Practitioners have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regard to child protection, which ensures children's welfare is safeguarded. All practitioners are vetted, an appropriate collection of children procedure is implemented and access for visitors is effectively managed. Practitioners have considered how they would record and refer any child protection concerns.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally happy, confident, enjoy their activities and are interested in their play, although some of the younger children sometimes struggle to settle. The routine effectively incorporates times for active and quieter pursuits. Children have opportunities to participate in different sized groupings, as well as play independently. Children are well supported by practitioners whilst they freely select from the play and learning resources and pursue their individual interests. Opportunities, however, for free and creative expression in art and design are limited. Topics are planned and pursued and it is clear that the current themes are Autumn and Diwali, with an interesting range of activities taking place around these, including a nature interest table with pine cones and other natural woodland resources on display. However, planning does not take account of the outcomes for children under three as identified within the Birth to three matters framework.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Practitioners make satisfactory use of planned and routine activities to extend children's learning. They utilize effective questioning techniques to stimulate thought. Observations and assessments of children regarding their progress and development is thorough and consistent. However, targets for next steps in learning for individual children are not sufficiently evaluated and incorporated into planning within the framework of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Also, activities are not always sufficiently extended to provide stimulation and challenge for more able children, particularly in the areas of physical and creative development.

Children show good levels of concentration and engagement. They play an active role in their learning as they make their own choices about what they want to play with. They learn to share and negotiate, as well as support each other in their activities. For example, one child took responsibility for arranging the hoops for the other children to jump into during a physical play activity. Children confidently ask for help and support, which is readily given by practitioners. For example, one child sought assistance to free a lorry which was stuck and the practitioner assisted him in seeking a solution, which he then managed to achieve himself. Children are encouraged to help themselves to a drink of water if they get thirsty, however, they do not

participate in the preparation of the snack, limiting opportunities for them to develop self-care skills and independence. Children develop their knowledge and awareness of a range of cultural traditions, through exploration during topic work, which enables them to learn about, and value, different beliefs and ways of life.

Practitioners readily converse with the children, ask open ended questions to extend their thinking, and help them to make connections. Books are attractively displayed in a welcoming and comfortable area, and children enjoy looking at books throughout the pre-school session. They are encouraged to recognize and name images in books, and understand the stories. Letters are displayed in the playroom for children to read, and from time to time their attention is drawn to these. Children select their own name labels when they arrive at pre-school, and are encouraged to write their names on their artwork, using their name labels as a guide. Mark making opportunities are available in more than one location.

Opportunities are routinely presented to children for them to practise counting, for example, the number of children at pre-school, and how many cups are needed at snack time. They subtract when participating in singing songs like "five little monkeys", however, opportunities for calculating and using mathematical concepts for problem solving are not sufficiently provided throughout the session.

A range of activities extends opportunities for children to explore and investigate and develops their knowledge and understanding of the world. They go on nature walks to explore the local environment and bring an interesting range of resources back to display on the nature table. They have an area available in the garden for planting seeds. They enjoy pushing wheeled vehicles along the floor and seeing how fast they travel down a slope. They enjoy constructing with a varied range of resources, which are routinely available, and use tools and a workbench in the designated workshop area. They have access to a range of programmable toys, for example, toy laptops, and use the keyboard and telephone in the designated office area. Children are encouraged to talk about past and present events, for example, what they did at the weekend, and what the day is today, which extends their knowledge of features within their environment.

Children get opportunities to participate in activities to promote their physical development. They competently handle small objects like pens and magnetic fishing rods. They complete puzzles independently and show good hand/eye co-ordination. They develop knowledge of health and bodily awareness when they are asked as part of a daily group discussion to describe the functions of various parts of the body. However, some equipment provided to promote physical activity does not provide sufficient challenge for older children.

Most children enjoy creating as part of a planned adult-led activity. However, there are insufficient opportunities for them to use their imagination, develop their ideas and create artwork and designs routinely throughout the pre-school session. They are encouraged to respond to experiences and express and communicate ideas when they feel the props used during story time and enjoy delving into the feely bag to bring out resources to prompt song ideas.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

An effective key worker system and good knowledge of children's home background ensures children's individual needs are known and met. Children become aware of the wider society as they explore a range of festivals and cultural traditions. For example, they are currently exploring the Hindu festival of Diwali. They enjoy creating glittery sand hand prints whilst they learn about the religious traditions associated with the festival and related background music is played to enhance the theme. There is an adequate range of resources depicting positive images of cultural diversity, gender and disability to support children's learning. Both girls and boys are encouraged to participate in all activities to broaden their range of experiences. The provision demonstrates a positive attitude to promoting an inclusive environment and there are good arrangements in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Children are generally well behaved, and are promptly comforted by practitioners when distressed. Practitioners act as positive role models and children learn to understand right and wrong through consistent boundaries, praise and age appropriate management of behaviour. Clear explanations are given as to why it is necessary to comply with ground rules, and children feel their contributions are valued when they receive a sticker as a reward for behaviour such as being kind, helping others and sharing well. A display of ground rules, accompanied by photographs of the children playing together, reinforces these concepts. This positive approach fosters children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Partnership with parents who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Parents are warmly greeted by practitioners when they arrive at pre-school. Information is shared in a relaxed and friendly manner. A parents' notice board in the entrance lobby displays relevant information including the weekly timetable, information about the practitioners, the policies and procedures, and there is a suggestions box. Parents receive a newsletter and there is an intention to hold formal sessions with parents to discuss their child's progress.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The manager has responsibility for day to day management. She works closely with the joint owners, who pay regular visits. They all have relevant qualifications and experience. Regulations are known and adhered to. This is a new provision and is still establishing procedures and systems. The owners, manager and practitioners are all keen to monitor, review and improve practice.

Regular meetings take place between practitioners, where relevant policy and practice issues are discussed. There is good commitment to professional training and development. All practitioners have childcare qualifications, and continually seek to develop their knowledge and skills. Practitioners have allocated designated areas of responsibility which they perform effectively. They work very well together as a team.

Children are cared for in a well organised environment. Practitioners are deployed effectively and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The number of practitioners working at the pre-school enables children to receive close, individual attention.

Satisfactory record keeping takes place. Most required information is kept, although some updates are required, and stored in a manner to protect confidentiality. There is a comprehensive set of written policies and procedures in place, which includes an operational plan. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

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

Not applicable.

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

Since registration there have been no complaints made 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.

## **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):

- improve the outcomes for children under three by using an approach in line with the Birth to three matters framework
- provide additional opportunities for children to use their imagination and express themselves creatively in art and design (also applies to nursery education)
- update documentation to include required procedures for incident reporting, changes in child protection and designated roles for practitioners.

#### **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):

- develop planning systems which incorporate targets for next steps in individual children's learning within the framework of the foundation stage curriculum
- extend activities to provide additional challenge and stimulation for more able children, especially when progressing their physical and creative development
- increase opportunities for children to develop self-care skills to promote their independence
- provide additional opportunities for calculating and using mathematical concepts for problem solving.

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