

St Thomas's Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	134023
Inspection date	17 April 2007
Inspector	Janet Maria Moutter
Setting Address	40 St. Thomas Street, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX1 1JP
Telephone number	01865 249800
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Registered person	St Thomas's Day Nursery
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Thomas Day Nursery opened in 1986. It operates from a converted office building on two floors in the centre of Oxford. The nursery serves parents from around the Oxfordshire area as well as the local community. The nursery is within easy walking distance of the railway station and major bus routes, including the Park & Ride services.

There are currently 61 children aged from four months to five years on roll. This includes 18 funded three-year-olds and nine funded four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery currently supports children with special educational needs, and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

A maximum of 40 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.15 to 17:30 Monday to Thursday and 08:15 to 17:00 on Fridays for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

The nursery employs 13 staff. 12 of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is one member of staff working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children have an excellent balanced and varied diet of freshly cooked food each day providing them with good nutrition and access at snack time to drinking water. Thought and consideration has been given to the children's diet, taking into consideration and meeting individual special dietary needs. Meal times promote pleasant social interaction between the children and staff where they have opportunities to develop independence skills, talk about the food they eat and develop fine skills as they learn to use their knives and forks. Posters, informal conversations and planned activities increase children's understanding of the importance of what foods are good for them.

Children's good health is encouraged by positive simple hygiene routines. Children wash and dry their hands using easily available soap, water and paper towels. After their main meal the older children brush their teeth. Staff encourage and supervise the children enabling them to develop their independence and learn why it is important to wash hands before food and after toileting. The clean, light rooms are maintained at a suitable temperature enabling the learning environment to be pleasant and welcoming.

Children take part in excellent daily regular physical activity. Outdoor activity is undertaken every day in the secure playground, where children competently use the outdoor equipment. They climb, run, peddle, build, dig, hide, shout and sing, in an outdoor environment that is well maintained, safe yet remains very natural. Although the nursery is situated in the middle of a build site, the nursery staff are making full advantage of this explaining the many steps to building houses and the children are delighted when new digger trucks arrive over the playground wall. The children enthusiastically use the climbing apparatus, push along and pedal toys increase their physical strength and abilities. They build with large bricks, dig in the sand, and hide in the play house. Children enjoy the outdoor opportunities; all staff interact extremely well with the children in the playground encouraging activity, involving skipping, jumping, balancing and stretching. Children develop small movements through the variety of activities they access. They use scissors, paintbrushes, pens and pencils, with increasing control. Young children rest when they become tired. Ensuring physical needs are met enables the children to make good use of the play opportunities. The babies come down from upstairs twice a day to play outside in the fresh air.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

A good clear child protection policy and procedure ensures staff and parents understand the role of the setting on the issue of child protection. The manager has a clear understanding of the action she would take if concerns were raised and is proactive in ensuring her knowledge is up to date.

Good measures are taken to ensure the children's safety. Daily risk assessments of the play areas ensure the environment and equipment is suitable for the children's use. Comprehensive risk management is undertaken to ensure outings provide the children with well organised enjoyable experiences with high adult to child ratios. Fresh drinking water is not available at all times and the children's health and safety is compromised by the positioning of the snack area. However, the staff encourage children to be aware of how to behave safely, for example

children hold the handrail and negotiate the stairs with care and they remind each other not to run indoors. Fire safety equipment is professionally checked and fire practices are undertaken. The large premises are secure and everyone signs in and out enabling a clear record to be maintained of who is on the premises.

Children use safe good quality toys and resources suitable for their ages and stages of development. Staff and children can easily access the toys and equipment. Close supervision of the children's play ensures all the children use equipment appropriately.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The nursery provides children with an extremely happy and secure environment where individual needs are recognised and developed. The staff encourages the children to feel a part of 'a family', encouraging their sense of belonging to the nursery. Children benefit from the walking through the two-five years old room each day and programmed visits where nearly two years old spend time meeting friends, also where they develop good relationships with the older children. Excellent settling in procedures enable children to settle and enjoy the experiences the nursery has to offer. Parents are able to leave their child confident in the knowledge that each child is cared for as an individual.

The children show interest and confidence as they participate in the activities. Routines enable the children and staff to make excellent use of the time available. When spontaneous learning opportunities arise, staff confidently utilise these opportunities.

NURSERY EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

Children have excellent opportunities throughout the nursery to develop their learning and skills in all areas of development. They show appropriate and growing self confidence and self esteem as they undertake the planned activities which stimulate their imaginations. Children confidently try new activities and are interested and motivated to learn. They speak confidently, ask questions and make suggestions as they play. For example, children sitting together with the teacher enjoying a story offer ideas and comments regarding the pictures in the book relating to the story they are listening to.

Children demonstrate good behaviour and self control appropriate to their development. Their ability to express a range of feelings is developing well, they express concern for others, annoyance when things go wrong and happiness and delight as they complete a task. Good opportunities enable children to develop appropriate respect for their own and other cultures and beliefs. Children learn to share and take turns enabling them to participate in group activities.

Children listen and respond with great enjoyment and attention to stories, songs, rhymes and some make up their own stories as they play. Poems, stories, rhymes and action songs are used extremely well to extend their vocabulary, and explore the meaning and sound of words. Children use speech to organise and explore real and imagined experiences, ideas and feelings extremely well as they go about their play in the home corner, tent and in the play ground.

Children learn to count in their play and activities, they sing number rhymes, count numerous items as they play and count in practical everyday activities as they help at snack and lunchtimes.

Their understanding of numbers, quantity, size, position and shape is developing well through practical activities and discussion. Children begin to use their mathematical ideas to solve practical problems, for example they recognise the pedal car will not fit through the space between the people and the sandpit.

Children move confidently, imaginatively and safely both in the outside play area and indoors. They competently use small tools, negotiate around furniture, and climb stairs. Some children recognise the importance of staying healthy, the changes in their bodies when they take part in physical activity and they know that they need to put their coats and hats on to keep their bodies warm when they go outside.

The effectiveness of curriculum planning is very good. It indicates the children undertake a variety of activities covering all areas of learning, and recognises the potential of extending some children to enable them to develop further. Learning is consolidated and parents encourage the learning process by helping the children select objects from home to bring, share stories and learn simple sounds and words.

The children have a wide variety of excellent learning opportunities; they learn at their own pace and are not rushed. Their natural interest is encouraged and spontaneous play opportunities are utilised.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff act as excellent role models behaving in a caring and considerate manner at all times, consequently the children behave in a similar way. Behaviour is managed in a consistent way enabling the children to develop an understanding of appropriate conduct.

Children learn about the environment they live in, creatures, the weather and cultural events. This increases their understanding and awareness of the world around them along with the diversity of the staff and the posters.

Children have good opportunities to learn to value diversity. Toys, resources and the adults who care for them at nursery reflect a diverse society, and plans indicate opportunities to meet police officers, firemen and look at cultural celebrations such as Easter, Christmas, and Diwali, improving the children's knowledge and understanding of the wider society.

All children are included and good provision is made for children with special needs. The small groups and caring environment enable children's confidence to increase and individual needs to be met well. The nursery in partnership with the parents obtains suitable advice and support from outside services as required to enable children to achieve their potential.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents speak very highly of the service offered, they comment on the warm friendly environment, and the approachability of the staff and manager. They know what their children do in the setting; newsletters and daily contact with staff keeps them well informed on what their child will be learning and how they can consolidate and assist the learning process. Parents comment how easily their children settle in the nursery and are confident, happy and responding well to the learning opportunities available.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The manager has a clear understanding of her role and responsibilities. Regular staff meetings, and inset days enable the staff team to plan and build on their knowledge, and understanding. Good self evaluation of the service offered enables the setting to clearly plan what they want to improve and how they can achieve their aims. The manager is aware of weaknesses and makes clear plans of how to make improvements.

Staff hold suitable qualifications and use appropriate training opportunities to develop their skills. They have a clear sense of purpose and undertake their responsibilities with good humour and enthusiasm. On going evaluation of activities and plans enables the setting to continuously improve. Staff use their time extremely well to provide the children with warm, caring happy experiences where they can learn and develop at their own pace.

Excellent use is made of the available resources to provide the children with interesting activities in the old but spacious accommodation. Children access a variety of areas for their activities, where good quality educational toys and equipment suitable for their ages and stage of development is easily accessed.

All documentation is maintained and easily accessed when required enabling the setting to work efficiently.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the nursery was given three key issues regarding the nursery education and three recommendations to improve the quality of care for children.

On the care side the Nursery was asked to ensure the child protection procedure complies with the September 2003 Children Act Regulations. Which has since changed and the staff are conversant with the current legislation. To include in the daily record of attendance the times of arrival and departure of children and staff. The registers now contain a more accurate record of the children's attendance which ensures the efficient and safe management of the provision. Finally to obtain written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment. The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety with the setting and ensures written parental permission is requested at the time of placement, to seek advice of any necessary medical advice or treatment in the future.

On the Nursery Education side the Nursery was asked to provide three opportunities for the children to learn, these were for the children to use programmable and I.T. equipment, to practise mathematical skills and to provide learning opportunities for more able children. All these experiences have been added to the planning and are being addressed. This means that the children receive lots of opportunities to extend their learning through play, while enjoying themselves and having fun.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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.

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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):

- ensure drinking water is available at all times and that children's health and safety is not compromised by the positioning of the snack area

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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