

Brambles

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	200830
Inspection date	26 April 2007
Inspector	Anne Felicity Taylor
Setting Address	Warwickshire County Council, Thorns County First School, Blackthorn Road, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 2DS
Telephone number	01926 854486
E-mail	
Registered person	Thorns Community Trust
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 outstanding. 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?

Brambles opened in 1981. It operates from a portacabin within the grounds of Thorns Primary School in Kenilworth and provides a pre-school and a before and after school club and holiday day care. It has an enclosed garden as well as the use of the school playground and indoor swimming pools. It serves the local area.

There are currently 111 children from 2 years and 9 months to eight years on roll. This includes 35 funded three and four-year olds. The pre-school is open from 09.05 until 11.45 and operates in term time only. There is the option for children to stay for lunch club until 13.00. The out of school club operates from 08.00 until 08.50 and 15.00 until 18.00 in term time. This service is offered to parents and children attending Thorns Community Infants School. The holiday club is open to the local community and operates from 08.00 to 18.00 in all school holidays. The setting currently cares for children with learning difficulties and children with disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language.

Two full time staff and ten part time staff work with the children. Nine staff have early years qualifications to level 2 or 3.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children have the benefit of an extremely interesting outdoor play area and a recently renovated garden. They are eager to get out into the fresh air and take advantage of the extensive learning opportunities that are always available. They are inspired to complete large construction projects, play imaginatively on the large boat and to do garden and planting activities. Children's physical development is further encouraged as they use the school hall for climbing and balancing activities and active team games. They develop their skills manoeuvring and pedalling using bicycles and cars. Children complete themes and projects that include walks in the school grounds to observe nature. The variety of creative and construction play offered ensures that extensive suitable activities to develop hand and finger movements are available, for example, collage and play dough.

Children are confident as they develop very good independence skills, going to the toilet and washing their hands with minimal supervision. They are encouraged to follow effective personal hygiene routines as they wash their hands before snack and help themselves to tissues to wipe their own noses. Staff are consistent and supportive as they encourage the children and offer gentle reminders. Clear, concise and thorough health policies are in place and these are all easily available to parents, for example, the administration of medication policy. Parents are consistently well-informed about any accidents that happen during the play sessions as meticulous procedures for accident recording are in place and extremely well-maintained. Children are cared for appropriately if they have an accident or become ill as staff who are first aid trained are always on site. A fully-stocked first aid box is easily available.

Children enjoy a variety of healthy snacks and drinks during the session, for example, fruit and a choice of milk or water. They are well hydrated because water is available at all times for them to help themselves. Staff offer reminders to children to have a drink, particularly if they have been taking part in strenuous activities. Parents providing a packed lunch for their child are confident that that all food is stored safely as lunch boxes are stored in the refrigerator and storage temperatures are monitored and recorded. Staff show great commitment to encouraging healthy eating as they sit and chat to the children during snack and mealtimes. This makes mealtimes happy, social occasions. Children are offered interesting activities to encourage healthy eating and to experience new tastes, for example, food tasting sessions. Parents are consulted regarding different diets and preferences ensuring children's individual needs are always met.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a very welcoming, secure and safe indoor and outdoor environment. The attractive displays of children's work all around the setting contributes considerably to the friendly atmosphere that encourages and stimulates learning. There is plenty of extremely well-organised play space indoors. The outdoor classroom and the recently redesigned garden provide great potential for play and learning in the fresh air. Children have easy access to the toilet facilities effectively encouraging independence. They are offered an extensive range of appropriate toys and equipment, ensuring children are busy and well-motivated. Children are able to request specific play activities, and learn to care for equipment as they help to tidy up.

Procedures are in place for staff to check and clean all toys and equipment regularly, ensuring children use suitable and safe equipment.

Forward thinking safety procedures ensure that children are kept safe, for example, perimeter fences and gates are secure. The registration of children and staff and the monitoring of visitors means that accurate records are in place should there be an emergency. Fire safety equipment is in place and checked regularly. Children become familiar with emergency procedures as they practise the evacuation procedure often. Staff encourage the children to learn about safety issues and they are aware that they should walk to avoid accidents and be aware of others. Supervision of the children is a priority and the very good staff to child ratios have a positive effect on safety issues, for example, staffing for outdoor play. Staff are constantly vigilant regarding children's safety and older children attending out of school care are aware of the boundaries regarding playing safely.

Children are kept safe because consistently thorough vetting procedures and induction are in place for all staff and volunteers. Child protection and fire safety issues are always included in the induction programme and therefore new staff are aware of referral and evacuation procedures.

Children are very well-protected from abuse or neglect. Staff regularly update their knowledge, attending training. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place. Senior staff have an excellent understanding of child protection issues including the referral process.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Older children attending for out of school care are offered a very broad range of appropriate activities. Weather permitting, they spend a lot of time outdoors getting plenty of fresh air and playing games. Children increase their skills skipping and playing football and tennis, cooperating with each other and building friendships. Children relish the active participation of staff in all sporting activities. Books and toys are taken outside and children can read quietly or play with friends, for example, imaginative small world play. During school holiday they undertake exciting projects, for example, making tents outside and creating wood work models. They are enthusiastic about food tasting sessions and delighted with face painting activities.

The pre-school play areas are set out with a wide variety of stimulating and inspiring play daily and therefore children settle quickly to imaginative and purposeful activities as they arrive. Forward thinking planning and excellent organisation by the staff team means that children are confident and secure within the daily routine. They are able to select their own play with appropriate support and guidance from the staff. Children display great warmth and affection for staff, with staff reciprocating appropriately. The effective key worker system means that parents are happy to approach staff members to discuss their child's care and learning and that they feel very well-informed about the Foundation Stage curriculum. Parents become involved in trips and celebrations, enjoying being actively involved in their child's learning.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the Foundation Stage and children are making significant progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Staff excite and motivate the children to take part in wide ranging activities. They challenge and extend the children's learning questioning and

challenging them effectively. Activities are adapted and broadened to meet the individual needs of the children.

Children have a busy routine and behave extremely well. Posters and pictures enable staff to offer gentle reminders about being kind and considerate, for example, 'good sitting', at story time. Children are eager to learn and try new activities, creating faster 'car runs' outside. They develop strong, friendly relationships and learn to negotiate, share and take turns as they develop play constructing space models together. Their confidence and self-esteem is boosted effectively as they show pride in the displays of their work and talk about their family and home. Children flourish as staff praise them for helping with tidying up and washing their hands before snack. Children visit the school hall regularly and use the school grounds, effectively developing a sense of the school community and becoming familiar with school staff, buildings and routines.

Children are developing a real love of books and relish stories told to them individually by staff and at group story time. They join in enthusiastically with 'The Hungry Caterpillar' and enjoy staff using props which enhance the story effectively. Children have an exceptional understanding of books and story telling as they make a book of 'When Goldilocks Went to the House of the Bears', with illustrations. Speaking and listening skills are a high priority and children are beginning to speak confidently, telling their news and as they chat with staff and friends. They are learning to be considerate when listening to others. Displays of letters, labelling and the use of name cards adds significantly to the children developing early reading and writing skills. The linking of sounds to letters is included skilfully into general routines, for example, at snack time. Older children are making excellent progress writing their names and numbers clearly. All the children enjoy imaginative play in the 'pet shop' and the 'travel agent', extending their understanding of purposeful writing as they 'take bookings' and make lists.

Effective teaching ensures that children have fun beginning to understand numbers and simple sums, for example, creating a book of opposites with photographs, comparing shape and size. They become familiar with mathematical equipment as they use a ruler developing a model of a castle, and therefore make extremely good progress using mathematics to solve problems. They frequently use positional language well, for example, as they extend the train track. Clear displays of numbers ensures that children make very good progress as they begin to recognise and write some numbers. Counting and mathematical language are used skilfully during routine activities, for example, completing the register and weather and date chart and at snack time, enabling children to become more familiar with numbers and simple sums. Children make excellent progress as they develop an understanding of size, shape and volume playing in sand and water and as they are offered many excellent and interesting opportunities to sort and compare. They enjoy developing patterns using boards and felt tip pens and during wide ranging creative activities.

Children benefit from extensive and innovative activities enabling them to gain an excellent knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They acknowledge different festivals, effectively developing their understanding of different countries and their religions and beliefs, for example, Chinese New Year. Parents enjoy watching the children do a dragon dance and the children build 'The Great Wall of China' in the garden and learn about paddy fields and growing rice. Children develop exciting outdoor play, in the muddy area and creating large construction projects with cogs and wheels. An excellent computer suite and knowledgeable staff ensures that the children make considerable progress and develop their skills using every day technology. Children learn about the seasons and the weather and observe the tadpoles develop with fascination. They are extremely attentive as staff explain and discuss how the

caterpillars will develop and how to look after them. Children draw plans as they develop ideas for building 'rockets' from recycled materials and use maps appropriately as they 'go on a picnic'.

The many valuable and interesting opportunities children are offered in creative development ensures they use their imaginations freely and express their feelings with confidence. They are delighted and excited as they discover items in treasure baskets and really enjoy learning a new song called Spring Chicken. They are fascinated and stimulated as they use musical instruments outside. Children use a wide variety of craft and collage materials including glitter, tissue paper, recycled materials and wood, creating pictures and models. They explore colour and texture with chalk, paint and crayons, experimenting on paving slabs outside and creating individual art work. Role play opportunities are excellent. They are extremely well-planned and resourced to give the children an enormous range of learning opportunities. Children run a 'flower shop' indoors with a till and telephone and notebooks to 'complete orders'. This is complimented with an outdoor 'garden centre', where children can fill flower pots and water plants. Children plan with great excitement for their 'pet show' and learn about caring for animals. They are confident to adapt and develop imaginative play, planning 'parties', including dressing up and making 'invitations' and 'food', with staff taking an active part when children involve them.

Planning is detailed, comprehensive and clear. Learning objectives are in place for all activities. They are evaluated and linked to areas of learning, ensuring that children have a balanced curriculum. Children's achievements and progress are observed constantly and recorded to ensure they are meeting their individual targets, which are set every six months. Achievement records are clearly linked to the stepping stones and observations are used well to plan the next steps for a child's learning. Staff deployment ensures children are supported and challenged appropriately, for example, when using the computers. Staff display great skill at extending and adapting learning to meet the needs of the individual child. This ensures that children with learning difficulties, children with disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language are given appropriate consideration.

Children concentrate on activities for long periods of time ensuring that learning is excellent. They display consideration for others and increasing independence. Staff praise and encourage the children to try new activities and children progress extremely well in this interesting, stimulating and caring environment.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are unquestionably very comfortable in the setting and are valued as individuals within their own family context. During settling-in visits parents provide lots of written and verbal information about their child, therefore enabling staff to meet all needs, for example, individual dietary requirements. Parents have confidence in the key worker system, knowing that they are able to discuss any details of their child's learning and care. Children follow the excellent example set by the staff team, therefore developing positive attitudes to others and encouraging the children to have good manners and to be kind and considerate. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They have access to interesting play resources pictures and posters that reflect positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability. Children therefore develop positive attitudes to diversity. Projects and festival celebrations are innovative and exciting including dressing up, food tasting, large construction projects and craft activities.

Staff know the children very well, and alongside the regular exchange of information with parents this ensures that all children's individual needs are met effectively. Staff have completed comprehensive training and are able to work collaboratively with parents and, where necessary, other agencies to support individual children. Children are busy and behave very well. They negotiate and share when playing alongside friends with books and construction kits. They begin to develop an understanding of right and wrong through the consistent boundaries being set and the age appropriate methods staff use to manage behaviour, for example, the use of pictures and posters. Children are delighted as they are praised for completing tidying up tasks and eating their lunch well.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. Children and parents benefit from the commitment staff have to developing strong open relationships. This effectively nurtures the confidence parents have in the service offered and their involvement in all aspects of their child's care and learning. Parents receive interesting information, including photographs, of the area of the curriculum being followed. They receive a regular newsletter about themes and projects their children are completing. They appreciate opportunities to discuss their child's individual needs and progress through the stepping stones with their key worker. Parents are involved in the group as committee members and fund raisers and have been extremely active in helping with the garden project. Parents really like the close links that the pre school has with the school.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's care and learning is consistently outstanding due to the excellent organisation of the setting. The welfare of the children is the highest priority and the setting and the routine is successful and constantly reviewed, to ensure it meets the needs of the children. Children are cared for in an environment which is safe and very well-managed.

The leadership and management is outstanding. Staff have vast experience in the care of young children and training plans display a commitment to further training in early years. Staff are offered support and opportunities to add to their present qualifications or complete their first qualifications in childcare and education. Additional short courses are completed regularly ensuring staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the developments in early years, for example, special educational needs. This supports their practice very well. Comprehensive systems are in place to evaluate and monitor the quality of teaching to ensure that it is effective in helping children to make progress while having lots of fun.

Policies and procedures support the staff in working very successfully with parents and carers, including the key worker system with regular reviews of progress. Senior staff understand the requirements to keep accurate records for the safe and efficient management of the group. Children benefit enormously as their whole family is welcomed and involved fully with the life of the setting. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection of the care offered in the setting several recommendations were made. There were some regarding the safety of outside play, with special attention to secure perimeters, the safety of outdoor fixed equipment and buildings, and the staffing of outdoor play. The pre-school outdoor play space and garden have been completely reorganised and renovated and now offer the children a safe and interesting play environment. The school

playground used by the out of school children has new, secure fencing and good procedures are in place to keep gates shut. Therefore children can play safely.

The recommendations regarding health issues including nappy changing facilities, the storage of lunch boxes and the completion of accident records have all been addressed. Excellent procedures are now in place for the recording of accidents and ensuring parents sign the written record. This means that parents are always well informed and that an accurate written record is in place. Should they be required, suitable nappy changing facilities are available ensuring all children's needs are met and that they stay clean and comfortable. Food given to the children, including from their lunch boxes, is all stored safely in a refrigerator where the temperatures are monitored and recorded.

A comprehensive complaints system is now in place and any complaints are recorded and therefore written records are available for parents.

The child protection policy has been reviewed and appropriate procedures are now in place to manage any allegation of professional abuse. Therefore the children are protected.

Following the last education inspection the setting was asked to provide more opportunities for the children experiment with sound and music making and to see numerals indoors and outdoors. Children now see numbers displayed in many areas of the playgroup rooms and the outside area, and also in many games and activities Therefore they become very familiar with and recognise numbers well. They are offered opportunities to listen to a variety of music and to make music themselves. They experiment with sound using the well-resourced outside area. The setting has also put in place a comprehensive assessment and planning system which ensures individual learning needs are met, and gives many opportunities for parents to discuss and review their child's progress.

Complaints since the last inspection

Concerns were raised in December 2005 that a child had left the setting unnoticed and walked home unaccompanied. It is alleged that when questioned, the setting did not feel that they had done anything wrong. These concerns relate to National Standard 6 - Safety and National Standard 12 - Working in Partnership with Parents.

In order to investigate the concerns raised, unannounced visits were made to the setting. During the visits, the Inspector reviewed documentation, made observations and interviewed staff.

The Inspector was satisfied with the lost child policy and was satisfied that it had been followed on this occasion. The Inspector was also satisfied with the evidenced communication with parents after the event and in particular, the subsequent communication with the parent of the child concerned. It was found that as a result of this incident, the setting had already taken positive steps by ensuring additional staff are available in the outdoor area. However, during the visit, the Inspector found evidence to suggest that the outdoor fenced area was not suitably maintained to ensure the safety of the children and was not satisfied with the detail contained within recent risk assessments relating to this area. As a result of this, a number of actions were set for the registered person to address. A response was received within set timescales and reviewed by a Team Manager. Maintenance of the fenced area is due to take place and an agreement has been made that the playground will not be used until this has taken place. An updated risk assessment has been provided and reviewed and the Team Manager is satisfied that appropriate steps have been taken to ensure compliance with the National Standards. The Registered Person remains qualified for registration.

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 outstanding. 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 MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

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