

Thundersley Congregational Church

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY343931
Inspection date	23 May 2007
Inspector	Janette Elaina Lockwood
Setting Address	Congregational Church, Kenneth Road, BENFLEET, Essex, SS7 3AL
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Registered person	Thundersley Congregational Church
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?

Thundersley Congregational Church Pre-School is run by a committee. It opened under new ownership in 2006 and operates from the Thundersley Congregational Church Complex in Benfleet, Essex. A maximum of 32 children may attend the pre-school at any one time and the group is open each weekday from 09:15 to 11:45 and 12:30 to 15:00 during term time. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 75 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 62 children receive funding for early education. The pre-school serves the local community and surrounding areas. The setting currently supports a small number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as some children who have English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs 12 members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The setting is clean and hygienic for children and staff take active steps to regularly check areas for cleanliness and wash toys and equipment. Children can talk about the reasons they have to wash their hands and staff remind them frequently. There is soap and warm running water available, with hot air driers for children to dry their hands. However, there are also communal towels in one of the toilets and playroom and a communal bowl of water for use after messy play. As a result of sharing water or towels, the risk of the spread of germs could be increased.

If children are ill or have an accident their needs are met in a caring and efficient manner. Several staff have up-to-date first aid certificates and the procedures for recording accidents are clear. Staff also take account of any existing health needs of children such as allergies and find out from parents if there are any other ways they can help the children to be healthy.

Children learn about the benefits of healthy eating as staff seize every opportunity to talk to them about different foods, for example, children know that milk is good for their bones. The snack menu introduces fresh and nutritious foods into children's diets such as fruit or cheese and crackers and the snacks are thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Several staff have undertaken food and hygiene training and are very aware of the importance of following food preparation and storage guidelines. They understand the benefits of providing fresh drinking water for children and set up a jug and cups for children to help themselves throughout the session. In this way, children are able to respond to their own thirst.

Staff are highly aware of the importance of helping children to develop their physical skills and keep a folder of ideas for physical play for reference. This includes introducing aerobics and ring games or using musical instruments to encourage movement to music. The setting benefits from a small patio area directly outside the main room which children can use for a variety of play activities. There are wheeled toys to learn balance and manoeuvrability as well as balls and hoops to help children practise their throwing, catching and kicking skills.

There are also indoor opportunities for physical games for children in the large hall, with running and jumping races, for example. Children love to use the parachute in this hall and staff are very skilled at getting children to learn to follow a range of movements – such as stretching up tall or crouching down small.

Staff are aware of the needs of the younger children in developing their use of tools and hand to eye co-ordination and provide a wide range of activities such as using large paint brushes or easy-to-use scissors to help them gain confidence.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises are part of a modern church complex and children use both a large airy room downstairs and a smaller room upstairs. Both rooms are very welcoming, brightly decorated with displays and children's work and well equipped with plenty of good quality toys and resources. Double doors from the downstairs room lead to a fully enclosed patio garden area.

In addition, children also have the use of a large hall at the back of the premises for indoor physical play activities.

Staff take positive steps to ensure children can play in safety and comfort by using effective safety equipment such as socket covers and door hinge covers to help protect them from harm. There are very secure systems for entering and leaving the premises and the setting has a clearly written intruder policy and procedures for lost and uncollected children.

There is a well-written and comprehensive set of procedures for carrying out risk assessments which includes those for outdoor and indoor and for anyone attending who may have a disability. As a result, risks to children are minimised.

Children are beginning to learn about safety for themselves because staff regularly talk to them during the session about simple rules to follow for safety. For example, children line up sensibly and talk about walking properly into the main hall and why they should do this.

Staff have their own roles and responsibilities to follow in the event of an emergency such as a fire and effective fire risk assessments are carried out. Regular emergency evacuation procedures are practised with children to ensure they know what to do in a serious situation and these are recorded to monitor their effectiveness to help keep children safe.

Staff thoroughly understand their responsibilities towards safeguarding children through in-house training from staff who have recently attended courses. They understand the importance of recording existing injuries and of being vigilant with children. Staff take steps to further protect children's identity by taking down photographs each day as sometimes other people use the room.

Although the safeguarding policy has been updated, it does not clearly detail procedures to follow if an allegation is made against a member of staff. The policy does, however, include telephone numbers for referral so that any concerns can be dealt with quickly. As a result, children are safeguarded in the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff are highly aware of the needs of individual children and offer a wide variety of interesting activities to help children enjoy and achieve through both the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage Curriculum.

Younger children generally attend the afternoon sessions and the morning sessions are skilfully aimed more at the older children. The grouping of children in both small and large groups helps children to develop their learning skills. For example, to learn to be part of a larger group and follow agreed codes of conduct or to adapt to being part of a smaller group with children of similar abilities.

The well-managed key worker system enables staff to recognise individual learning and care needs of children so they can draw on this knowledge to effectively plan for the child's next steps.

Children under three years benefit from mixing with older more able children to look up to and learn from. They settle in well because staff find out information about their personal likes and dislikes from their parents and give high consideration to these needs. The 'Birth to three

matters' framework is successfully used to provide a good range of activities suited to children under three years so they become confident learners and to begin to make sense of their world.

Children in this age group are content to play by themselves, for example, with small world toys, occasionally interacting with staff or other children. However, most join in readily with others in group activities and are beginning to learn to take turns with staff support. As a result, children are developing their social confidence and building up their roles and identities in the group.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and use the Curriculum Guidance as prompts for planning. They clearly recognise that children learn in different ways and learn at different rates by grouping them effectively and planning for a range of abilities. The good use of observations and recording help staff to build on what children already know and plan for their next steps.

Through the planning, staff know how children are to be grouped as well as the aims of the activities and it is clear to see how more able children will be challenged. The system for taking small groups of older children into a separate room is effective in meeting individual learning needs.

Children are excited and motivated to learn and staff show enthusiasm and patience with children, asking them relevant questions to make them think and finding out what they already know. Staff know how to encourage children to try new experiences and when to sit back and allow them to use their own initiatives to lead their own play.

Staff write observations which build up into a valuable and accurate record about children which helps them to track children's progress through the stepping stones. As a result, staff know and can plan for what individual children need to do next to progress in their learning.

Children have their own trays in which to keep their things so they can develop a sense of belonging in the setting. They show enthusiasm for the activities offered and confidently approach staff for help and support, demonstrating their sense of trust. Children are developing their independence, for example, by being encouraged to pour their own drinks or take themselves to the toilet.

Children have frequent opportunities to develop their communication, language and literacy skills through staff providing a range of activities in everyday routines. Children talk about initial sounds and letters throughout the session, successfully talking about words that begin with the letter of the week. They frequently write for a purpose, writing their names on their work spontaneously, or making shopping lists for example in role play. Children enjoy stories and looking at books, with adults or by themselves and good quality books are available to encourage them into the book area. Children understand that text has meaning and can confidently find their name cards.

Children's understanding of numbers as labels and for counting is very good with more able children counting objects accurately to 20. They use large numbers in their play and many can recognise numerals up to 9. Understanding how simple mathematical concepts are used in everyday life is introduced through role play or during routines such as snack time to find out how many pieces of fruit are needed for the children, for example. Basic calculation is brought

into action songs and rhymes so children can see how numbers can be used to add or take away. Children learn about shape, space and measure using language to compare such as bigger and smaller and find out about capacity containers to fill with water or rice.

Children are confident with using programmes on an electronic learning aid and sometimes have use of a computer with simple programmes. They learn about their own familiar world and about those of others often talking about different parts of the world. For example, they track children's holidays on a map. Staff provide children with opportunities to sort, classify and compare, using a range of equipment in different colours and shapes for example, when they help to sort out toys during tidy up time each day.

Children are able to express their own ideas and are supported by staff standing back and allowing them the freedom to experiment with different media and creative techniques. Staff value the children's art work by displaying it all around the setting. Free painting and drawing are regularly available and a range of 'junk materials' are available to inspire children's imagination. Staff encourage different types of role play, for example, putting a rowing boat in the garden and helping them imagine where they might go and what might be in the water. Additionally, children love to move to music sing familiar songs and rhymes or make music.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's social moral spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Staff raise children's awareness of world issues and give simple explanations for fund raising at children's level. For example, the setting sponsors a child in Brazil and staff are able to show children photographs and talk to them about how the child lives. They have raised money for animals, water and vaccinations which lead to conversations about people's similarities and differences. Children are encouraged to talk about their homes and families by taking a teddy bear home at weekends and on holidays. Parents record their children's exploits with the teddy bears to allow further insight to how children spend their time at home.

The well-written equal opportunity policy and the equality and diversity policy has references to welcoming children with English as an additional language and details where to obtain resources and help to support them. Equipment and toys provided are often chosen to reflect different families and people from other cultures so children learn about diversity. Staff have worked hard to find posters in different languages and to show people with disabilities and as a result, children begin to value people's similarities and differences.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in this setting. Staff are learning Makaton and teaching it to children to help with communication and there are two staff trained to help a range of children with special needs. The Area Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator is able to visit for advice and support and there are systems in place to work closely with parents. As a result, children with special needs are cared for properly and their needs met.

Children's behaviour is very good and there is a calm atmosphere in the group. There is a named person for behaviour management and positive strategies are used consistently so that children know the simple rules to maintain harmony between them. As an example, children know to sit quietly on the mat and stop and listen immediately when they hear the tambourine to alert them it is tidy up time.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are initially informed about the Foundation Stage Curriculum in the prospectus and each area of learning is described clearly so that parents are aware of what their child will be learning. A large information board displays planning for parents to see and there is clear information relating to themes or the letter of the week for example, so that parents are able to make a contribution to activities. Parents take the time to send in their comments for the inspection and indicate how highly they rate the care and education their children receive and comment positively on the dedication of the staff.

Parents understand that they are able to see their children's records at any time but there are no set times for this although there is information to let them know about the availability of the records. Parents are also invited to contribute what they know about their children to their records as staff speak to them regularly in an informal manner.

The learning environment offers parents regular opportunities to see evidence of what children have been doing through large bright displays. Newsletters provide information about any changes to the routines or setting and staff find out as much as they can about children by establishing effective informal channels of communication.

Children's information forms include information that will help a child to settle in and parents are welcome to stay, easing the transition from home to setting. Parents are informed about staff qualifications so they can feel confident in their childcare knowledge. There is a parental involvement policy which encourages parents to help at sessions and share their interests. For example, one parent brought her baby in to have a bath so that children could learn a little about caring for babies.

There is a complaints policy which is consistent with the requirements of the National Standards and this details the contact details for Ofsted.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The quality of leadership and management is good. All staff are able to contribute their ideas to the planning so they can take ownership of it, however, it is monitored by the supervisor who oversees that the teaching and learning are consistent. As a result, children progress well through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals.

There are clear aims stated in the operational plan and staff are aware of their responsibilities through written job descriptions as well as through direction from the supervisor. Regular appraisals help to highlight any strengths and weaknesses so that staff are given opportunities for personal development and effectiveness through training.

The supervisor is enthusiastic and steers the setting towards improving all the time. All staff have had the opportunity to complete their own copy of the self evaluation form so she can see how they view the setting.

There are comprehensive recruitment and vetting procedures and one member of staff has undertaken training to help with 'safer recruitment'. New staff have to declare any breaks in employment, references and previous sickness absence. References are taken up and identification documents seen. When any staff leave, they also have to complete a leaver's interview sheet, in case there are any particular reasons that can be improved upon.

Staff have attended a wide variety of training courses and are committed to improving their own skills and the quality of service offered. They have their own roles and responsibilities and children are grouped appropriately so that their individual learning needs can be more accurately fulfilled. Overall, children's needs are met.

Records policies and procedures are well-written, meet the requirements of the National Standards and are easily accessible. Any personal details of staff and children are kept confidentially to help keep children safe.

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 many contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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 anyone responsible for hand washing procedure is aware of, and complies with, environmental health requirements
- ensure that the child protection procedure complies with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. This refers to procedures to follow if an allegation is made against staff.

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):

- be proactive in improving parents' awareness of and accessibility to their children's progress records.

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