



Thatcham Children's Centre Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	507888
Inspection date	01 July 2005
Inspector	Rosemary Davies
Setting Address	Lower Way, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG19 3RR
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Registered person	Thatcham Children's Centre Pre-School
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?

Thatcham Children's Centre Pre-School opened in 1992. It is managed by a voluntary committee made up of parents of children at the pre-school. It operates from Thatcham Children's Centre and serves the local area. The pre-school uses a large hall and two smaller rooms, with ready access to a large outdoor play area of grass and tarmac. The pre-school can use an adjacent purpose-built adventure-play area. The pre-school opens five days a week during school terms. Sessions run from

09:15 to 11:45 and from 12:15 to 14:45.

The pre-school can care for a maximum of 26 children aged from 3 to 5 years, at any one session, although in practice only 20 attend the afternoon sessions. Of the 59 children on roll, all receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school supports children with special needs. There are no children attending who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight staff of whom five have appropriate early years qualifications. An early years teacher from the local authority and the area Special Educational Needs Coordinator, provide regular support.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from daily fresh air and exercise, making full use of the extensive outdoor facilities. They choose whether to play outdoors or not for the first part of a session but, later all children go out to take vigorous exercise in well-organised group activities. Children show they understand how they feel and what their bodies need, taking off jumpers because they "feel hot" or helping themselves to water when thirsty.

Children begin to understand the principles of a healthy diet. Many eat fresh fruit at snack time with staff explaining clearly that this is good for them. They try new flavours such as fresh pineapple and apricots with encouragement from staff. Children learn how to keep themselves healthy, knowing that they must wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. The staff use effective procedures to prevent the possible spread of infection by, for example, cleaning tables properly before and after children eat.

Children benefit from all staff who work with them having first aid qualifications. This means that minor incidents such as new sandals rubbing, are spotted and dealt with appropriately as staff are alert to the children's needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a spacious, well-ordered environment because staff plan room and equipment layouts carefully. Children may rest and look at books in a comfortable, quiet area or enjoy 'messy' activities outside. Staff minimise potential hazards extremely well. They conduct daily risk assessments both indoors and outside and take similar, sensible precautions for off-site outings.

Children use good quality, well-maintained equipment and resources. They play safely because staff remain vigilant. They do not run too fast on grass when it is

slippery after rain because staff remind them not to. They understand in which areas of the playground they use wheeled toys and where they play ball games because staff enforce simple safety procedures. They know that they use the 'walking rope' when going in or out doors in a big group. This innovative idea stops them rushing and possibly falling, on hard tarmac.

Staff know their responsibilities with regard to child protection. They all undertake appropriate training so that children remain safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in this pre-school having fun as they learn through play. They enter eagerly and confidently, knowing the daily routines. They choose their favourite activities independently and make their own decisions about whether to play indoors or outside. They often concentrate at one thing for long periods because they enjoy what they do. Sometimes, however, when together as a whole group, their attention drifts and they become restless because they sit for too long or routines are repetitive. For most of the time, children benefit from having first hand, practical experiences through which they learn about the world around them. They learn to look carefully, for example, at their own reflections, trying to represent what they see through painting or explore the properties of water using tubes. Staff support children's play well, helping them to think about what they are doing and encouraging them to develop their play in different ways.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children progress well along the stepping stones to the early learning goals experiencing a broad range of activities. Staff use their knowledge of the principles for children's learning, which underpin the 'Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage', very well. As a result, children learn in a stimulating, child-centred environment and are well on the road to becoming independent learners. They utilise their newly- acquired knowledge and skills well in their play. They use early mathematical language accurately, for example, realising that the ducks in the 'hook-a-duck' game are, "all the same size" but recognising that the numerals on them are different. They develop their physical skills particularly well, making very good use of the extensive outdoor area and variety of equipment. Children use marks readily: they paint purposefully, draw imaginatively and make 'notes' in the role-play area. Many write their names clearly, however staff sometimes label children's creations rather than encouraging children to do this for themselves.

All children, including those with special needs, benefit from frequent interaction with the staff. They enjoy conversations on a one to one basis which help develop their vocabularies and speech. This is because staff take care to speak clearly and give children time to respond. Staff question children effectively to extend their thinking. Their flexible approach results in children using materials and equipment imaginatively, to develop their learning as they wish and at their own pace. Children experience a good balance of adult-led and self-chosen activities; of quiet or energetic times and a good mix of group or individual play.

Children develop friendships with each other, reflecting the caring attitudes of the staff who do all they can to find out about the children's needs, abilities and interests when they first start. Staff monitor children's progress throughout their time in the pre-school, making regular observations of what they can do and what they have yet to learn, so that children make good progress in their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children enter the pre-school happily, looking for their particular friends and being well aware of how sessions run. This means they know what they are supposed to do and when, which helps them feel secure and settled. They behave well, becoming absorbed in their self-chosen activities and clearly understanding how they are expected to behave. They know that they share toys, for example, and tell staff when this does not happen, trusting the adults to sort things out and to give them comfort if needed. This reflects the warm, caring relationships which exist throughout the pre-school. Children see their work valued and know that staff listen to what they have to say, which develops their feeling of self-worth. They learn about themselves, others and the world around them, so that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

A good partnership with parents contributes substantially to children's wellbeing in the pre-school. Staff make parents fully aware of what the pre-school offers before children start. They find out all they can about the children so that when they first come to the pre-school they settle in quickly. Staff keep parents fully informed of their children's progress and development throughout their time there. Parents express their appreciation of all that staff do for their children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation of the pre-school and the leadership and management of nursery education, are good. The supervisor and committee work together well to monitor and improve what is offered to the children. All understand their roles. The registered person oversees staff appointment, induction and appraisal which results in staff being well qualified to care for the children. All required policies and procedures, which contribute to children's good health, safety and welfare, are in place and regularly reviewed.

The supervisor leads a strong staff team. They are committed to improving their practice through regular training. They work together very well and cover the activities on offer effectively so that children's play is supported and extended. They organise the indoor and outdoor space effectively and rotate activities through the week so that all children may experience them equally. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care and nursery education inspections recommended that: risk assessments be undertaken; an operational plan devised; child protection procedures be reviewed and planning, together with record keeping, be developed further.

The committee has instigated a clear operational plan which includes daily risk assessments of the premises. Children now play in a well-organised, healthy and safe environment in which potential hazards are identified and minimised. Clear child protection procedures are in place with staff knowing how to protect themselves from possible allegations of abuse.

The leadership and management of nursery education have reviewed planning and record keeping. Plans show clearly the grouping of children as well as the focus of planned activities so that staff are clear on the aims for children's learning. Children's records clearly show their progress and development, and form the basis of planning what they need to learn next.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- explore ways of managing group times so that children remain attentive and purposefully engaged (also applies to nursery education)

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):

- further encourage children to use their early writing skills during daily routines

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