

St Thomas' Church Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	300781
Inspection date	12 July 2007
Inspector	Geneen Yvonne Hulse-Brown
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Registered person	St Thomas Church Council
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?

St. Thomas' Church Nursery has been operating from the present premises in the Crookes area of Sheffield for over 24 years. The group serves children and families from the local area and further afield. The nursery has access to the church hall, a fully enclosed outdoor play area, kitchen and toilet facilities.

The nursery offers sessional care to a maximum of 26 children aged three to under five years, Mondays to Fridays from 09.00 to 12.50, term time only. There are currently 35 children on roll and all receive funding for early education. The setting currently supports children with learning difficulties and children for whom English is an additional language.

There are six staff employed to work with the children, of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a recognised early years qualification. The nursery is supported by a team of seven volunteers, of whom three hold recognised early years qualifications. The setting is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and receives support from the local authority community teacher. The nursery is owned by St. Thomas Church Council and has charitable status.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enthusiastically undertake a broad range of activities that contribute to keeping them healthy. They choose to play indoors and outdoors as part of the well-structured routine, enjoying picnics and camping role plays as part of the outdoor topic. Children enjoy exploring and digging in the garden, developing good physical skills as they manoeuvre around obstacles and find a space to sit down. They confidently balance on different sized blocks and play imaginary games of jumping from one to another taking care not to fall in the water, when playing with larger apparatus indoors. Children move around the outdoor area with increasing skill using small stilts and spin hoops around their waists with glee. Children recall outings with delight, as they look at memory books of coach rides, visits and walks to the local shops. They effectively manipulate small tools, such as scissors, pencils, paintbrushes and cutters to build their fine motors skills, pouring their own drinks with increasing confidence. Children have fun squeezing and moulding play dough to make shapes and models.

Staff plan numerous opportunities for children to talk about being healthy, through the use of projects, themes and topics. Children demonstrate a good understanding of a healthy diet, as staff talk to them about healthy eating as part of the daily routine. They enjoy social snack times where they can sit together to chat and share news, having fun as they act out a 'teddy bears' picnic' outside, with toys they have brought from home; although they are not routinely involved in the preparation and serving of snacks. Staff take into account children's individual dietary needs when planning snacks.

Children are cared for in a warm, clean environment, where good methods ensure they develop a broad understanding of personal hygiene, such as hand washing before baking and after messy activities. Children know they wash their hands to remove germs. Well-organised systems are in place to promote the children's general health, for example, effective systems to record accidents and medications. Almost all staff hold a current first aid certificate, which is regularly updated as part of the nursery training plan.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure and safe environment where all risks are minimised as staff make creative use of all available space. Effective use of displays, children's work and planned activity areas enables the children to enjoy a fun environment where they extend their independence. Children move around the premises with confidence, as they negotiate and choose where to play. They make active choices of indoor or outdoor activities as they learn how to keep themselves safe. Children understand that they walk indoors and take care when climbing, as staff sensitively remind them of agreed practices. Effective use of topics and regular discussions, for example, local walks to help them learn how to cross the road, remind children about keeping safe and consolidates their understanding. Premises are safe and secure as experienced staff effectively monitor all access to the children's play areas. Recording systems are in place to accurately record all present. Visitors to the setting are checked and names recorded in the staff attendance book.

Children make active choices of what to play with from a broad range of easily accessible resources and request anything they cannot see. Well-planned areas allow them space to be

quiet, use their creativity, extend their imagination and develop their play. Children benefit from open access to a small and secure outdoor play area, which they use as part of the planned routines. They can explore and have fun, for example, pretending to camp in tents, share picnics and look at books.

Secure procedures are in place to support good practice, as all staff have completed basic child protection training. The staff team have all attended the Local Safeguarding Children Board training to develop their understanding of the changes to legislation. A comprehensive policy is in place to support the nursery and reflects individual roles and responsibilities. Effective systems are in place to ensure children are kept safe, as the staff clearly understand their role in protecting children and use this information to promote the children's well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at nursery and make good progress in all areas of development, as knowledgeable staff plan interesting activities and fun experiences to motivate and stimulate them. Effective use of the 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage' ensures they provide good quality care and education. Children enthusiastically undertake stimulating activities, as they actively make choices about where to play. They are happy, well settled and secure, confidently selecting resources to build on what they know, extend their experiences and develop their thinking.

Children are successful in planning their own time and making decisions about what to do, for example, when deciding what to make at the craft table and choosing to play outside. They demonstrate good independence skills as they put on aprons to bake, act out role plays and play dress up. The children are curious and interested in all around them, as they confidently move between activities playing with friends. They ask visitors what they are doing and engage them in conversations with confidence. Children show off their work with pride as they talk about collages and models they have made. They actively seek out the support of staff to help find a chosen resource or join in their games, for example, looking for a piece to complete a model and asking for help to build up skittles. Children confidently seek friends to play with and involve adults in their discussions as they establish very good relationships with staff and children. They recall birthdays, how old they are and talk about brothers and sisters at home with enthusiasm.

Staff consistently respond to the children's individual needs, adapting activities to follow their ideas and suggestions and making changes to the routine as needed, such as when extending role plays. Children are encouraged and supported to try out new skills and solve their own problems. For example, working out which bricks to use to make a model and using sticky tape to fix straws to a plate to make a carousel. Effectively used observations and staff's knowledge of the children enable them to build on what the children can do to extend activities at their own pace.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Experienced staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage to ensure that children progress well in all areas of development. Children are interested and motivated to learn through well-planned and spontaneous activities and experiences that challenge and extend them. They show high levels of concentration when playing turn-taking games, listening to stories and baking. They wait their turn to weigh

ingredients and stir the mixture patiently, chattering to each other about the buns they are making. Children have free access to tools and materials, such as construction blocks, cardboard boxes, glue and sticky tape to build simple and more complex models. They talk together as they design houses and suggest to each other how long to cut straws and where they will stick to make a better model.

Children enthusiastically extend their imagination, making up stories, exploring their creativity in well-planned small world and role-play areas as they act out stories with farm animals, camping and picnics. Effective use of books support activities and help extend the children's thinking, for example, stories about the outdoors, picnics and the seaside consolidate topic work. Children enjoy building and designing, extending their imagination and their natural creativity using a wide variety of craft materials, as they have free access to a broad selection of resources throughout sessions to make choices. They have fun exploring paint and sand, talking about colours and making models from play dough.

Children are confident speakers, as they listen closely to each other, sharing experiences, talking about home, family and events with enthusiasm. Staff are very interested in what the children say, consistently offering support, listening with interest and making suggestions to enhance their experiences. Children are very confident, engage well with each other, and welcome visitors, sharing their achievements and negotiating roles in games. They play very well together and alone to enthusiastically progress their ideas. Behaviour is very good and reflects the staff's high expectations. Children negotiate, take turns and share, learning how to manage their own behaviour and show respect for others. They enjoy learning about the lives of others through topics, visitors and planned activities. Children learn about growth by planting bulbs and bedding plants. They enthusiastically seek out bugs and mini beasts on visits to the local nature reserve and make seed cakes to feed the birds.

Children are consistently introduced to number and problem solving through daily activities, counting and sorting as part of daily routines. At group time, they sing and play ring games. They weigh and measure when baking buns, count the number of children making popcorn and when singing, work out how many are left when one is taken away. Children confidently use mathematical language, talking about colours and shapes as they build and match numbers to numerals when playing ladybird dominos. Children competently balance using scales to weigh flour, sugar and margarine to make buns. They patiently wait their turn to stir the mixture and add ingredients, although they do not always have their own bowls and tools to aid individual participation and further extend independence. They demonstrate good problem solving skills as they know to add more flour to stop the mixture being too sticky. Children have fun making patterns in paint, gloop and sand.

Well-organised observation systems effectively monitor the children's progress, as staff complete regular observations based on the stepping stones to assess where the children are at and plan the next steps. Children successfully undertake a wide range of focused and freely-chosen activities, with staff responding and making changes to incorporate the children's ideas and suggestions. Staff demonstrate a broad knowledge of the early learning goals, and use this to plan a challenging and interesting curriculum that includes all areas of learning. Open-ended questions effectively extend children's language, develop their thinking and value what they say, for example, when playing outside they talk about picnics and what foods they are having. Staff effectively plan for all areas of learning and recognise the importance of further developing their outdoor curriculum to offer children additional opportunities to explore their surroundings, make choices between indoor and outdoor activities and extend their independence. Well-presented displays of the children's work successfully contribute to promoting their

self-esteem. Excellent photographic evidence supports staff to demonstrate how children learn and progress. Memory books record events, themes and topics, supporting all learning aspects and children enthusiastically recall events and activities as they look at the books alone and in groups.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children establish strong and respectful relationships with staff and each other; they make friends easily and actively seek them out to play with. They demonstrate high levels of self-esteem, as they confidently question and make informed choices about what to do. Sensitive and caring staff warmly welcome children to the nursery, offering high levels of praise and encouragement, which in turn supports their progress and learning. Children's individuality is valued as staff work closely with them to ensure they achieve their full potential. They take turn when playing domino games and skittles, reminding each other who is next and sit patiently waiting to bake and make popcorn. Meaningful and fun activities aid children's awareness of others, raising their understanding of similarities and differences; this in turn increases their understanding of the wider world. Children enthusiastically look at memory books, with photographs of themselves immersed in activities and on outings, to recall events and share happy experiences. They enjoy walks to the local shops to broaden their knowledge of their surroundings and visitors to the nursery come to talk about their jobs as part of the 'people who help us' topic. Photographs show children listening to the dentist, exploring a fire engine and acting out crossing the road with the lollipop lady.

Books, toys and pictures promote positive images around the setting. Staff and children share their home experiences with each other as part of planned and spontaneous activities. Children's behaviour is very good and reflects the staff's high expectations. They understand consistent boundaries, demonstrating care and respect for each other, as they share, negotiate and take turns when playing games and using equipment. Children find a space at the craft table to explore their own ideas and help each other create models from boxes and straws, by suggesting what to put where. They listen with interest to what each other has to say when sitting together and at group times. Staff are good role models, showing care and consideration for each other, which the children in turn imitate and develop good practice. The nursery consistently supports children with learning difficulties, working effectively with parents and professionals to ensure they make very good progress to reach their full potential.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff consistently keep parents very well informed about what the children are doing at nursery. They share information on a daily basis and the nursery holds regular sessions for parents to see children's records and discuss progress. Parents are well informed about termly topics, verbally and through newsletters and help at sessions on a rota basis. Staff and parents work effectively together to meet the children's individual needs. Progress meetings involving staff, professionals and parents for children with learning difficulties ensure all are well informed and plan a consistent approach for the children. Parents are made aware of the nursery curriculum and how children learn using displays, memory books and meetings. Parents confidently approach staff and demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the setting. They are extremely happy with the service offered. Parents agree that they are well informed, able to discuss concerns as they arise and receive lots of information about their children's all round progress. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery are good. Very effective organisation of the provision ensures that children's care and learning are well supported. The established and experienced staff team clearly demonstrate a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities successfully to meet children's individual needs. Strong working relationships and effective procedures ensure the ongoing monitoring, development and evaluation of the provision. The staff team use the self-evaluation form as a working tool to review and assess the provision, highlighting areas for development. They review practice on a six-monthly basis as a team.

The staff team show a high commitment to training and development to consolidate practices and further enhance the provision. A training plan is in place and staff access a wide range of in-house and local authority training courses. All training received is cascaded to the team as part of staff and training meetings. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures are in place to promote good practice and offer an effective service. The National Standards evidence file collates all information to support the all round organisation of the nursery. This is a working document and is continually reviewed to meet changes to working practice. Staff meet together daily to share information, discuss practice and raise concerns as they arise. Regular planning and staff meetings are held to review and evaluate activities and working practice. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The recommendation from the previous inspection was to ensure that parents sign medication records. New forms have been devised and systems are in place to make sure that the nursery is effective in keeping children healthy.

Key issues were raised at the previous nursery education inspection related to the range of opportunities for children to plan to use tools and materials to design and make their own ideas and purposeful opportunities for children to record mathematical work. The nursery has successfully addressed these issues by making tools and materials freely available for the children to make choices from well resourced areas. Children are offered many opportunities to record numbers, draw and explore mathematical concepts, for example, playing domino games. This contributes effectively to children's all round learning and development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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 complaint record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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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):

- consider how to further involve children in taking responsibility for their personal care, for example, when preparing and serving snacks.

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 resources to ensure individual participation, for example, when baking
- consider ways to extend planning for the outdoor curriculum.

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