

St Thomas Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	309486
Inspection date	06 July 2007
Inspector	Janet, Elizabeth Singleton

Setting Address	Marton Street, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 1XX
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Registered person	St Thomas Pre-School
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Full day care
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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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Thomas Pre-School is registered under the pre-school committee and has been offering day care for over 19 years to families of young children in Lancaster and the surrounding communities including Carnforth and Heysham. It is located in a single-storey prefabricated building to the rear of St Thomas's church in the centre of Lancaster city, and is open from 09.30 to 12.00 hours Monday to Friday, and from 12.30 to 15.00 on Wednesday afternoons. A maximum of 20 children may attend the setting at any one time.

There are currently 30 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 11 children receive funding for early education. The setting supports those children for whom English is an additional language, or who are identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities.

The pre-school has access to one large play room sectioned into areas for role play, messy play and large apparatus, and a smaller room for quieter activities and floor toys. Toilet facilities are accessed within the large room. There is a kitchen and storage area accessed from the hallway to which the children do not have access. There is no outdoor play area.

The setting employs two staff who are both qualified teachers. Pre-school staff are regularly supported by volunteer support workers and there is a parent rota system in operation, whereby parents assist at sessions and are counted within the ratios of adults. Pre-school staff welcome advice and guidance from the Teacher Team.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is promoted satisfactorily because the staff follow appropriate hygiene practices, for example, encouraging the children to wash their hands before snack time. However, staff do not always promote children's understanding of the reasons why they need to wash their hands, or explain the need for children to wipe their noses to prevent cross-infection. The first aid box is fully stocked and checked by the designated first aid person. All staff hold a current first aid certificate. All medical documentation to meet children's health needs is in place and up to date.

The children are satisfactorily nourished as they enjoy a snack of juice and crackers. Their dietary details are recorded and all staff are made aware of their individual dietary needs.

Children develop their physical skills as they ride their wheeled toys, stop, start and change direction. They engage in a range of enjoyable activities which promote their coordination, for example, crawling and climbing up the climbing frame and their delight in sliding down the wooden slide. They develop their fine movements as they handle small tools with a degree of competence, using cutters, scissors and glue sticks to make pictures.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and safe indoor environment which is planned to meet their needs by planning areas of continuous provision, for example, sand, free painting and role play. The children make choices from suitable and safe equipment including mark making, construction materials and small world. They are able to make decisions and choices from the child-height storage units. Parents and children are warmly welcomed into the group and observe the displays of children's work, for example, letters of the alphabet and butterfly pictures, all of which develops the children's sense of belonging.

Children are protected from harm and neglect because there is sufficient space for the number of children who attend, and regular risk assessments are carried out to ensure that the premises remain suitable for purpose. Children are beginning to take responsibility for their own safety because the staff remind them to be careful, to avoid running and to tidy up.

Children's welfare is further protected because staff understand their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary, based on national and local guidance.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy and achieve as they readily come into the setting and are eager to participate in the activities provided. They are developing their confidence and esteem by having very positive relationships with the staff. They seek out the staff to help them with their tasks and the staff encourage the children to make choices; children laugh and giggle as they play hide and seek or sit together and read a story. The planning includes good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

Children enjoy their time at nursery as they move freely through the setting, making decisions about their play. They choose from the areas of continuous provision and engage themselves in the play dough, poking, stretching and rolling the malleable material.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress because the staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage. They find out about children's starting points as they observe and assess their skill base and involve parents by asking them for comments regarding their children's individual development. The staff plan a balanced and effective curriculum which gives equal weighting to the six areas of learning. Children's individual learning needs are assessed regularly and recorded to show their progress through the stepping stones. The observation and assessment of individual children's learning is used successfully to inform future planning. Staff understand how children learn by planning activities which include practical and immediate experiences, and is flexible to allow for children's own interpretation of the activity. Staff's good use of questioning challenges and supports children to achieve as much as they can. They work directly with the children, sitting with them and engaging with them in their play.

Children are very interested and motivated as they remain at and persevere with their chosen activity. They listen attentively to stories and understand stories have a sequence with a beginning, middle and end. They delight in accessing the book corner and readily set up their own story time, for example, accessing the book corner and engaging the staff in reading the books to them. They are independent as they attend to their own personal needs and attempt to manage their fastenings. They chatter confidently during their play and use their developing language skills to organise their thoughts. They ask who, why and what questions of staff as they explore the sand and when playing in the role play. Children are very competent in counting, and count to 20 and above. However, early calculations are not fully promoted to provide children with opportunities to use mathematics for problem solving. They learn about time as they discuss the seasons, months and days of the week. They talk about today and yesterday as they play and discuss what happened at home and going on holiday.

The children play and learn in a culturally rich environment. They celebrate their own festivals and those of others. They play and learn using resources which promote their understanding of diversity, for example, cultural dolls, and Balti dishes in the role play. They delight in the wonderful, creative opportunities provided as they create their own masterpieces from collage materials, free painting and exploring the colour mixing. They use their imagination as they act out roles from home in the home corner. They make chocolate birthday cakes and list the ingredients needed to bake the cake. They are confident as they sing loudly and with confidence when they take part in singing at circle time. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are valued as individuals and are fully welcomed into the setting. They access the toys, equipment and activities provided for them. They view posters, access books and use utensils, for example, Balti dishes in the role play, which reflect diversity and thus children learn to respect people's differences. Children who have English as an additional language, or who have learning difficulties or disabilities are welcomed and included in the setting and staff are aware of the need to adapt activities to enable children to participate fully. There are positive strategies for helping children learn to manage their behaviour by the use of praise, which is consistently applied by all staff. The children respond to the effective use of praise as they beam with pride when acknowledged.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents feel informed and able to talk to the key worker about their child and, in discussion, all said their children enjoy their time at the pre-school and are making progress. However, although parents are made aware through the displays and notice boards of how the setting assists the children who attend, they are not fully informed in regard to the Foundation Stage to enable them to understand the work being done to move their child towards the early learning goals. Parents can view their child's folder and are encouraged to become involved in the nursery by assisting on the 'parent rota'.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They learn about the community and other people's cultures as they engage in activities which promote their understanding. They enjoy playing together and learn to share as staff discuss the reasons why. They learn to manage their behaviour because staff are consistent and give appropriate explanations. They are well mannered, saying please and thank you when asking for items.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting makes appropriate use of time, space and resources to enable children to make choices and access toys and equipment. They move freely through a suitably organised environment that encourages the use of all areas of play. All necessary documentation is in place and supports the care and education of the children. The complaints policy does not clearly identify how any complaints or concerns will be recorded and shared with parents.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff are led by a management team who are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. There are regular staff meetings to address all issues and identify changes to the care and education practice. The staff work well together as a team and support each other in their roles. Training is encouraged for all staff to increase their knowledge and skills to improve their practice. There are appropriate staffing procedures in place, including the induction and appraisal system, to ensure staff meet children's needs. There are regular planning meetings held to discuss and identify any areas of necessary improvement, and that planning continues to meet the needs of those children who attend.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provision was asked to assess the temperature of the setting and take any corrective action necessary, and to review and update the risk assessment to ensure

hazards are identified and any recommendations made are fully complied with. The setting was also asked to review practices with regard to hand washing prior to snack times, and to revise the setting's policies, including child protection and behaviour, to ensure they contain all the relevant information as outlined in the National Standards and their guidance documentation.

The setting has temperature controls on all radiators and can adjust the temperature when necessary. Documentation in regard to the risk assessment, child protection and behaviour has all been updated in line with the National Standards. The hygiene practices have been improved to ensure children wash their hands prior to snack time.

The temperature controls and the improved documentation ensures that children are kept safe and can play in a comfortable environment, and that any action which needs to be taken regarding behaviour or child protection is in line with the National Standards and is appropriate to maintain children's welfare. The improved procedures for hand washing ensure cross-contamination is limited and children are made aware of good hygiene practices.

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):

- develop children's understanding of good hygiene practices and the reasons why they need to wash their hands and clean their own noses
- develop the complaints procedure to include how you will record any complaints made and how these will be shared with parents.

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 children's good use of mathematics and counting to include early calculations
- ensure parents are provided with enough information on the foundation stage to enable them to have an understanding of the work taking place.

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