

St. Thomas Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY248592
Inspection date	05 July 2007
Inspector	Verlyn Ulanda Blake
Setting Address	St. Thomas C of E Primary School, Astley Street, Leigh, Lancashire, WN7 2BP
Telephone number	01942 672 730
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Registered person	St. Thomas 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 satisfactory. 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 Pre-School Group was registered in 2002. It operates from a detached single storey pre-fabricated building located on the site of St Thomas Church of England Primary School, on the outskirts of Leigh town centre. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

The pre-school is open during term time from Monday to Friday. Sessions are from 09.00 until 11.30 and 12.45 until 15.15.

A maximum of 20 children from three to five may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 39 children on roll, all of whom are in receipt of funded nursery education. Children attending the setting are drawn from the locality around the school. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties.

There are three staff working with the children, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have valuable opportunities to learn about being healthy, as staff encourage them to follow appropriate hand washing practices and support them in being independent in using the toilet. Staff ensure that surfaces used for food preparation or for snack times are routinely cleaned with anti-bacterial cleaner before use. This means that the premises, furniture and equipment are clean for children to use. Children need no prompting to clear away their cup from their place at the snack table. As a result they are learning about measures to take to keep themselves safe from cross contamination. Ongoing cleaning routines and the overall practices help to minimise the risk of cross infection.

Children have access to drinking water throughout the day. They enjoy a wide range of nutritional and well balanced snacks. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that children's individual and dietary needs are known and respected. Children who do not like, or who cannot have a particular snack are offered an alternative, ensuring that their needs are met. At snack times, children choose either fresh milk or water to drink. Children's ability to develop their pouring skills are inhibited in this area as staff pour all drinks for them. Children are also unable to self select their snacks.

Children's good health is promoted as they enjoy daily access to outdoor play, weather permitting. They have good opportunities for spontaneous vigorous exercise and they enjoy using a range of equipment. Children participate in a varied range of appropriate activities which helps them to develop their small and large muscle movements. This enables them to acquire well developed physical skills, and promotes their control and co-ordination skills when using the range of resources on offer.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. The premises are very welcoming to children with attractive displays of their work as well as welcoming posters and photographs. Risk assessments are completed indoors and outdoors to ensure they are always safe for children to use. Children are therefore able to move and play safely and freely as the areas used by them are safe from hazards. Children are protected from unknown adults entering the premises because there are good systems in place to ensure this cannot happen.

Children have access to and enjoy playing with a wide variety of resources, furniture and toys, which are in good condition. These are checked regularly to ensure that they remain safe for use. Children are able to select from the range of resources which staff set up each day. Additionally they can self select from labelled trays which are stored at children's level to promote ease of access, independence and choice. Throughout the sessions, toys are changed to ensure that children do not become bored or restless. This practice means that the opportunities afforded to children provide a wide range of stimulating experiences.

Staff help children to understand about safety as they re-enforce rules and give clear explanations when something may pose a hazard. For example, when a child is climbing on the pre-school equipment. Children have an understanding of what action they should take in an emergency because regular, well recorded fire evacuation drills are practised.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because all staff have an appropriate appreciation of their roles and responsibilities to protect children from non-accidental harm. As a result, staff are able to confidently put the procedures into practice if they have a concern about a child in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are well settled at the provision because they have built secure and trusting relationships with staff who put the children first. Staff strongly advocate learning through play and by engaging themselves in children's freely chosen play. The learning atmosphere is vibrant and busy, therefore, children are keen and eager to learn. Activities are provided to develop children's self expression, listening and speaking skills. This increases their ability to work on their own and to enjoy the company of other children. All children enjoy a good range of activities which help them to learn. The activities interest them, hold their attention and help them to make good all round progress and development in all areas.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress because staff generally devise plans well to support children's learning and physical development. Written plans demonstrate that staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals. For example, staff plan and provide a balanced programme of learning across all developmental areas that clearly link to the stepping stones. The manager is pro-active in keeping her own and all staff's knowledge up to date by ensuring that all attend regular, ongoing training events. All staff contribute to the play planning. As a result, the curriculum children receive is fun, stimulating and exciting. Children's learning is effectively extended by staff who ask them questions to challenge their thinking processes. Staff note children's achievements and use tick sheets and observations to compile a report for parents. However, these are not used to plan for children's next steps, and do not clearly track the progress individual children are making. As a result planning and recording does not always build upon what individual children already know and can do.

Children part easily from their carers and are keen to participate. They arrive excitedly telling staff about their new experiences at 'big school'. Children develop good relationships and friendships. They are learning to recognise their own feelings and show care and concern for others. For example, one child is unhappy because he is playing on his own. As this is brought to the attention of the other children, one child quickly says 'I'll go and play with him', quickly followed by another child. Children demonstrate a sense of pride in their own achievements demonstrated as children spend long periods cutting out battle ships, boats and helicopters. They concentrate on cutting them out neatly, and sticking them onto the paper. Some stay and finish their work even when all of the other children have left the table. This shows well developed concentration and perseverance skills.

Children initiate conversation about their own experiences. For example, whilst looking at and reading a book about animals to a member of staff, a child recounts his visit to an Aquarium. Children are developing a good appreciation of letters, and some children are able to pronounce letters phonetically during their freely chosen play. More able, older children's literacy skills are progressing rapidly with some reading simple stories to the whole group. Children are skilful communicators, using language to express their thoughts, feeling and ideas. The well equipped writing area allows children to access writing resources freely. They confidently experiment

with writing for a variety of purposes and many children are attempting to write their own names independently.

Children use mathematical language during their freely chosen play. For example, a child says to her friend, 'I will roll you because you are smaller than me'. Children are becoming aware of numbers and many can count purposefully to approximately 10. They recognise familiar numerals and delight in answering simple counting problems. Planning shows that children are given opportunities to help them to memorise, count up and down, and complete simple addition and subtractions. Children freely access a range of information and communication technology equipment to support their learning. They understand how to follow programmable resources, such as the computer and telephones. They enjoy playing with the large cranes and diggers pushing buttons and turning levers, showing an interest in why things happen and how things work. Through planned themes children learn about the world in which they live. Children are well challenged as they build and construct, creating their own models and designs, using a range of large and varied shaped construction blocks.

Children's physical skills are developing well. Children are enthusiastic in their play as they move energetically and with confidence both inside and out. They make full use of all available space as they respond to songs and rhymes by means of gestures. They are able to combine and repeat a range of movements and follow instructions well. Their fine motor movements are refined as they engage in a range of activities which require hand-eye co-ordination. For example, as they play with the playdough, they concentrate on using the shape cutters and rolling pins. Whilst looking at magazines, they use the appropriate left or right handed scissors to carefully and skilfully cut around their chosen items. Children's creative development is good. They use their imagination well and engage in a range of role play opportunities using a range of small world play. They are able to experiment with art and craft materials and explore a range of media and materials in their freely chosen work. They use their senses to explore the colour, feel and texture of the play dough and talk about what they think it looks like. Children enjoy the access to musical instruments and develop confidence as they learn to express themselves in different ways.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are warmly welcomed and greeted by staff which promotes inclusion and equality of opportunity well. Children have access to a limited range of resources which reflect the wider community. Whilst they have opportunities to learn about their own culture, by taking part in the celebration of festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Halloween, their ability to show an interest and enjoyment in cultural and religious differences is inhibited, as staff do not include these within the long, medium or short term planning.

Children with learning difficulties are able to fully participate. Staff work closely and effectively with their parents and other professionals to ensure that children's all round needs are met appropriately. A good exchange of information with the school staff, ensures that the care that children receive when they move onto school meets children's specific requirements. Children develop a positive view of themselves as staff regularly praise their achievements and make them feel valued and important. For example, a more able child is encouraged to read his story book to all of the children at story time. Children's behaviour is generally good. They learn about boundaries of behaviour and are learning to take responsibility for their environment. For instance, all children join in with putting toys away.

Partnership with parents is good. Effective links ensure children receive consistent care. Staff and parents communicate daily using verbal methods. Parents are aware of the activities their children participate in as they receive verbal and written information of activities and topics. Yearly meetings enable staff and parents to formally discuss their child's development. Parents are given copies of tick forms which indicate what the child is able to do. These do not however, give parents information that allows them to be involved in their child's learning and support them effectively at home. The parents notice board provides them with clear information about the setting. Feedback from parents indicates they are happy with the setting. They comment that staff are very approachable, friendly and enthusiastic and their children are doing really well at the setting.

Overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's education and welfare is supported by staff who are appropriately qualified and experienced in caring for young children. Systems are in place for vetting staff. However, these are not always effectively followed through. Staff are well deployed both indoors and out allowing children to receive appropriate adult supervision and attention. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure the setting runs smoothly and children benefit from secure routines. Children's personal information is securely stored and easily accessible to support children's care, such as in an emergency. There are effective systems for recording the daily attendance of children, staff and visitors, which has a positive impact on promoting children's safety.

Leadership and management is good. The effective leadership of the educational provision enable children to make good progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Staff are well motivated and committed to providing children with high quality care and education. This helps to enhance the feeling of warmth within the setting and creates a very positive learning environment for children. The manager has a clear vision for the nursery education and sets clear directions for the continual improvements in the organisation of nursery education and the outcomes for children. She seeks the guidance and support of Sure Start to assist this process.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provision agreed to ensure that information of children's individual dietary needs remains confidential at all times, and ensure that the complaints procedures has the local region's address and contact number displayed.

Children's individual dietary needs are now maintained in a confidential manner, thus ensuring that children's needs are met and respected, in keeping with parents wishes. The local region's address and contact telephone number are now displayed, meaning that parents are able to access Ofsted's contact details more readily in the event of a complaint.

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 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):

- review snack times to include opportunities for children to develop self help skills
- provide opportunities for children to gain an awareness of the cultures and beliefs of others, and provide a range of resources and activities to enable them to show an interest in cultural and religious differences
- review the setting's vetting procedure to ensure that all adults looking after or having unsupervised access to children are suitable to do so

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):

- continue to develop monitoring and assessment systems to track the progress children make; ensure that these inform the planning and identify the next steps in learning for all children
- ensure that the systems used contain sufficient information to enable parents to take part in their children's learning.

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