

St Peter's Thundersley Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	204000
Inspection date	01 November 2007
Inspector	Patricia Mary Champion
Setting Address	St Peter's Church Hall, Church Road, Thundersley, Benfleet, Essex, SS7 3HG
Telephone number	01268 753830 (during sessions) or 01268 774205
E-mail	
Registered person	St Peters Thundersley Preschool Committee
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Peter's Thundersley Pre-school is run by a committee and opened in 1964. It operates from the main hall and foyer within the church hall building, adjacent to St Peter's Church, Thundersley, Essex. All children share access to a secure, enclosed, outdoor play area. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions times are from 09:15 until 11:45.

There are currently 33 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these, 25 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school serves the local community and surrounding areas.

The pre-school employs 12 staff, of whom five of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years or teaching qualifications. There are two staff currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority and the Pre School Learning Alliance (PSLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have regular opportunities to be active and develop their physical skills. In the hall, space is created each day for physical activities. For example, children climb confidently and safely on the climbing frame. They ride bicycles, scooters and small cars with enthusiasm and adjust their speed and change direction to avoid obstacles. Children kick, bounce, throw and catch balls and hoops with increasing control. They show a good awareness of space as they play circle games such as 'Farmer in the Den' or 'Ring a Roses'. Children have experiences in the fresh air when weather permits. The outdoor area has recently been extended and renovated to give children improved outdoor play opportunities. Children can rest or relax according to their needs. In the hall a cosy area has been created with cushions and soft toys so that children can sit quietly and look at the books.

Children are well nourished because they are offered a balanced and varied menu at snack time each day. For example, children have healthy options of apples, bananas, grapes and strawberries. Staff are well aware of any allergies or special dietary requirements so that individual needs are met. Although children talk about the food that is good for you, they are not yet involved in preparing the snacks. There is easy access to drinking water so that children do not become thirsty or dehydrated. Children independently pour their own drinks from the water dispenser or they bring their own juice bottles.

Children stay healthy because they understand that they need to wash their hands before eating or after using the toilet to remove any germs. They know to put used tissues and wipes in the bin. Liquid soap, paper towels, individual wipes are provided to reduce the risk of cross-infection. Fresh running water is available for children to use to wash their hands in the toilet area. However, there is a risk of cross-contamination because children use communal bowls to wash their hands after messy activities in the hall. There are adequate nappy changing facilities and staff try to ensure that they can preserve the children's privacy and dignity. Staff use effective hygiene practices such as wiping surfaces with anti-bacterial cleanser. There are well-established procedures for recording accidents and when medication is administered. The first aid kit is readily accessible and all staff hold first aid certificates and can deal with minor injuries. The staff team show commitment to maintaining and protecting children's health and have booked to attend food hygiene training.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a bright, spacious and generally safe environment. Staff make the hall welcoming by displaying examples of artwork linked to children's recent learning experiences. The entrance doors to the hall are kept locked during sessions to keep children secure. All persons visiting are monitored, identity documents are scrutinised and their attendance is recorded. A password system operates to ensure that children are always collected by authorised adults. The staff are vigilant when there are other users of rooms within the premises. Children are always accompanied to the toilet and staff respectfully ask people to use other toilets within the premises when the pre-school is in operation. Risk assessment covers all areas of the premises and daily checks are undertaken so that any potential issues are quickly addressed. However, the written safety policy has not been updated to include current health and safety requirements.

Children learn about their own personal safety. They regularly practise fire drills so that they know how to evacuate the premises in an emergency. Staff use activities as an opportunity to discuss potential hazards with children. For example, they talk about the dangers of fire when they put candles on a birthday cake and children use a zebra crossing when playing with the bicycles to develop their knowledge and understanding of road safety. Children use tools such as scissors carefully and in safety. A suitable range of play equipment is provided and the staff have an inventory of resources to choose from. Tables and chairs are an appropriate size so that children can eat and play in comfort.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff have a good understanding of their child protection responsibilities. The written child protection policy has been updated so that it is consistent with guideline procedures from Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This ensures that staff know the correct procedures and can act in the best interests of children if they have concerns about their welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and enjoy their time in the pre-school. They are developing independence as they choose between a variety of activities and resources that are developmentally appropriate. When children arrive in the morning they join the circle time and are introduced to the range of learning experiences they have on offer. Experiences vary as a different supervisor plans each day. Children are very curious and show higher levels of involvement when they are provided with activities that encourage them to explore and experiment. For example, children show great pleasure when sprinkling glitter onto play dough or they find out what happens when sand and water are mixed together.

Children form warm relationships with the staff team. Staff take a sensitive approach and cuddle children as they sit and listen to stories. They talk to children as they play and support their language development through talking about familiar things, asking questions and singing songs. Although children are contented whilst they play and make satisfactory progress, the staff are not yet using the 'Birth to three matters' framework to plan activities or assess the development of the youngest children attending the pre-school.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The staff are developing a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and the way young children learn. The curriculum is balanced and encompasses all aspects of each area of learning. Sessions include opportunities for adult-led tasks and the activities that children choose for themselves. Children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals. Staff observe children as they play and use these observations to identify their next steps in learning. This ensures that children are offered suitable support or challenge with extension tasks for the older children. Children have the opportunity to work in small groups with their key workers, who then write detailed comments in notebooks explaining how each child approaches the activity and what they have achieved. Progress records linked to the stepping stones are also kept. However, the staff do not currently complete an initial profile to assess the children's starting points. The pre-school has appropriate resources and staff are eager to incorporate the newly renovated outdoor area into their activity planning. Topics and themes ensure that children's learning experiences are varied and staff use materials and equipment that reflect the community the children come from and the wider world.

Children are developing their independence skills and willingly help the staff with small tasks. They attempt to put on their aprons before painting and their coats before going outdoors to play. Children help to distribute drinks at snack time and collect the bowls ready for washing up. Children understand about the need for acceptable behaviour and follow simple instructions, for example, when lining up to go outside to play. Staff support children in their self-care when visiting the toilet or washing their hands.

Children communicate confidently with staff and each other. They are interested in visitors and the older children ask questions and enjoy explaining what they are doing. Each day children bring items for 'show and tell' and are rewarded with a sticker. Children listen attentively to stories and also choose to look at books for pleasure. They are encouraged to recall stories and remember what they see in the books. Although children easily recognise their names, there are few simple signs and labels displayed at child height to enable them to learn that words convey meaning. Children are starting to write their name on their artwork and there are sometimes mark-making materials provided so that children can draw or colour pictures to take home. However, they do not always have writing materials so that they can write for a purpose within their role play.

Children develop mathematical skills through planned activities and everyday routines. Staff skilfully extend children's knowledge of numbers as they match, sort and classify pictures relating to autumn. Children sort counters by shape and colour and learn about capacity and volume as they play with sand and water. They calculate and take part in simple problem solving as they count the number of children at registration and work out how many there are when another child arrives.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is promoted through topic based activities. They observe the seasons and know that leaves change colour and fall from the trees in autumn. Children show a great deal of excitement when they go outside into their new outdoor play area for the first time and find leaves and twigs that have blown onto the path and grass. They find out that squirrels like to collect and hide acorns and hedgehogs sleep during colder weather. Activities such as printing with leaves or making autumn collages encourage children to touch and explore natural items. Children investigate the changes that happen when water is added to sand or chalk and use magnifying glasses to observe items very closely. There are occasional opportunities for children to learn about technology when they use a computer.

Children are given good opportunities to develop their hand-eye coordination. They move beads carefully on a frame, thread cotton reels onto strings and carefully lace cords in and out of punched holes in cardboard using pushing and pulling movements. Children manipulate malleable materials as they pat, roll and squeeze play dough into shapes.

Children enjoy exploring with paint, glue and modelling materials. Staff provide craft materials and the initial idea and children then produce individual pieces of work. Children explore colour and find out what happens when two colours are mixed together. They talk about the texture of things and autumn leaves are described as 'crunchy'. Children use their imagination as they play with small world figures, dress up in a variety of costumes and hats or make 'lunch' in the home corner. They sing enthusiastically and are building a wide repertoire of Christmas songs as they prepare for the Christmas concert.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children feel a sense of belonging when they find their name card on arrival. The majority of children enter the pre-school confidently and the staff sensitively support and comfort children who feel unsettled. Children are encouraged to bring comforters from home to carry or play with because the staff recognise and understand that this may help young children move between home and the pre-school. Regular opportunities for discussion with parents ensures that staff get to know the children well. There is an equal opportunities policy, however, this has not recently been updated to reflect all aspects of the pre-school's practice. There are suitable systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the special educational needs coordinator has attended relevant training.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children learn about their own and other cultures and communities. Resources such as books and small world play reflect diversity so that children learn to feel good about themselves and respect others. Children learn about festivals and traditional events from around the world. They show care and concern for each other and celebrate each others' birthdays by singing 'Happy birthday to you' and children collect and take items into church for the Harvest Festival. At the end of each session children are encouraged to say goodbye to each other.

Children respond well to the staff's expectations for good behaviour. They play harmoniously and learn to share and take turns as they play and say 'please' and 'thank you' at snack time. Staff have a calm approach, speak respectfully to the children and act as good role models. Activities are provided so that children can discuss their emotions and strategies such as a sticker reward scheme boosts children's confidence and self-esteem. There is a written behaviour management policy, however, this does not yet include reference to bullying.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents received detailed information about the pre-school and curriculum via the prospectus, newsletters and clearly displayed notice boards. Regular meetings are held between the key persons and parents so that they are fully aware of their children's progress and achievements. Parents become involved in the running of the pre-school by joining the committee or taking part in fundraising events. They become involved in the children's learning by contributing items linked to the themes and topics for 'show and tell' at circle time. Positive comments are made by parents regarding the care provided at the pre-school. They value and appreciate the information the staff share in their children's notebooks and voluntarily recommend the pre-school to others. Although the staff are aware of the need to keep a log of any complaints, the complaints policy has not yet been updated to meet the revisions to the National Standards of October 2005.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the very effective staffing levels. The staff are effectively deployed and ensure that children are closely supervised. Rotas are devised so that staff always know their roles and responsibilities. Suitably qualified supervisors lead the sessions each day. An action plan is in place for at least half of the staff team to hold appropriate early years qualifications to Level 2 or 3. All the staff have been vetted and cleared through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). However, the recruitment procedures for vetting new staff are not yet fully robust because checks that applicants are suitably physically and mentally fit to work with children are not undertaken.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The manager and staff team are supported by a management committee of volunteers. Each supervisor for the day plans focussed activities and decides the layout of core learning experiences in the hall. Staff share ideas at regular meetings and all staff are involved in delivering the curriculum. The manager is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision for care and nursery education. She has developed a list of agenda items for action. Although the manager completed a self-evaluation form during this inspection, the pre-school management have not yet adopted an ethos of reflective practice. The supervisors are not yet evaluating the activities or the morning routine to ensure that children's learning is fully maximised.

All the essential documentation that supports the smooth running of the pre-school is in place. Paperwork is securely stored and staff are well aware of the need to record information confidentially. An operational plan is currently being developed to explain how the setting runs. Some written policies and procedures that promote children's welfare and safety have been reviewed and updated. However, some policies lack the necessary details and do not meet the requirements of the National Standards and associated guidance.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection two actions were raised. The provider was required to ensure that Ofsted is notified of any changes in committee members and to devise procedures for lost or uncollected children. Ofsted is now notified when new committee members are appointed and there are clearly written procedures for staff to follow in the event of a child being lost or uncollected. There were also two recommendations made. The provider was asked to ensure that entries in the accident book are kept confidential and to update the child protection policy. The method of recording accidents has been reviewed and staff now record each incident separately. The child protection policy has been reviewed and updated to include the procedures to take in the event of an allegation against a member of staff. These improvements have enhanced children's welfare and safety.

At the last inspection for nursery education the provider was asked to use the children's assessment records to plan the next steps in children's learning and to increase opportunities for children to develop their understanding of simple calculation in everyday routines. Each key worker now regularly updates the assessment records for each individual child and identifies their next steps. At staff meetings the staff discuss gaps in children's learning and use this information for future planning. There are now more opportunities for children to explore calculation within the everyday routine. For example, as they work out how many bowls are needed on the table at snack time, count candles as they are added to a birthday cake or count how many children there are at registration. These improvements enhance children's mathematical development and ensure that activities are planned to offer challenge and build on what children know and can do.

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.

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 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 and update policies and procedures so that they meet the National Standards and associated guidance (this refers to policies regarding health and safety, equal opportunities, complaints and behaviour management)
- ensure that hand washing procedures meet current environmental health recommendations
- ensure that recruitment and vetting procedures are robust
- improve outcomes for children aged under three years by using an approach in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

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):

- provide more labels and signs in the environment so that children understand that words carry meaning and consistently provide opportunities for children to write for a purpose within their role play
- evaluate the use of time, space and resources to ensure that children are consistently inspired to achieve as much as they can
- develop a system for assessing the different starting points from which children develop their 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