

Thurleigh Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	219207
Inspection date	17 October 2007
Inspector	Susan Marriott
Setting Address	High Street, Thurleigh, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK44 2DB
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Registered person	The Trustees of Thurleigh 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?

Thurleigh Pre-school opened in 1999 and is managed by a committee of parents, chaired by the school head teacher. The group operates from the Foundation Stage classroom in Thurleigh Lower School, and the classroom has en-suite toilets for the children. There is a separate outdoor play area and the group are able to use the school hall, playground and field.

The pre-school is registered to take a maximum of 16 children aged between two and five years. There are 12 children on roll and of these, six receive funding for nursery education. The group operates five afternoons each week, term time only between the hours of 12.00 to 15.15. There is a lunch club available every weekday from 12.00 to 13.15.

There are three members of staff, including the leader, who work with the children and of these, two hold an appropriate early years qualification. The pre-school work very closely with the early years teacher within the school and follow similar themes with the children. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy because staff follow effective health and hygiene policies and procedures. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and the premises are maintained in a properly clean state. Tables are regularly sprayed with anti-bacterial spray and the toilets are kept clean and hygienic. Children learn about germs and healthy living through the daily routines. Staff remember to promote discussion about the reasons for hand washing and a soap dispenser has been placed between the sinks at the right height for small children. This encourages them to wash their hands more often without having to ask for help. Tissues are readily available for keeping noses clean.

Children receive appropriate treatment in medical emergency because all staff hold current and suitable first aid qualifications and the first aid box is accessible and suitably stocked. Regular checks of the first aid box ensure that supplies do not run out and that sterile dressings past their expiry date are discarded and replaced. Staff conscientiously record all accidents, but occasionally do not record the time of the accident or gain a parental signature. Potentially, this compromises children's welfare.

All the children enjoy free flow play between the classroom and the outdoor area. This means that children have ample opportunity to participate in daily indoor and outdoor activities. They learn to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills through a generally appropriate level of challenge. A broad range of outdoor play equipment is changed daily and provides opportunities for children to climb and balance. Children use bikes, tricycles, rockers and cars. Staff set appropriate tasks and support children on an individual basis, throwing and catching balls and aiming into a plastic basket or through suspended plastic hoops. The school has recently been approved as a Healthy School and the pre-school have implemented the targets set. Effective self-evaluation has identified further improvements through the planning of more vigorous exercise.

Children benefit from healthy snacks and their dietary needs are met because staff work well with parents. The snack rota is displayed for parents information and includes plenty of fruit. Snack time is being used to good effect as a learning time for children, promoting social skills and the development of independence. For example, children serve themselves and pour their own drinks. Children do not become thirsty whilst playing because they can help themselves to a drink from named drinking bottles in a tray at child level.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are kept very safe in the pre-school because staff give excellent priority to security issues. Children's safe arrival and departure is well-supervised although actual times are not always recorded appropriately. Staff record fire evacuation procedures and carry out drills with suitable frequency to ensure the safety of the children. Staff monitor visitors to the setting by keeping a visitors book. Relevant risk assessments are completed on a daily basis and the garden is thoroughly checked before use. Children learn to keep themselves safe in the setting because staff give good explanations as to why, for example, it is necessary to secure the harness on a doll in a buggy to prevent her from falling out.

Children are warmly welcomed and well-cared for in a stimulating, suitably safe and secure indoor and outdoor environment. The staff have put up photographs, posters and pictures to make the classroom attractive for children and there are bright displays of children's work which enhance the environment. Children benefit from an exciting outdoor garden where staff provide activities to reflect all areas of the curriculum. For example, during the inspection, children enjoyed sensory exploration of pumpkins and others chose to aim balls through hoops suspended from the roof canopy. Staff arrange equipment and toys to ensure that children can access resources in the classroom easily and independently.

Children's welfare is properly safeguarded because they are protected by vigilant and caring, informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures in line with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Some staff have received suitable training in this field and relevant and current reference information is readily accessible. The written policy in relation to safeguarding children has been appropriately updated.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their play and learning because staff are confident, enthusiastic and highly-skilled in their childcare practice. Staff provide a broad range of worthwhile activities, both indoor and outdoor, which engage children throughout the pre-school in the learning process. The group is small and numbers of children are low. This means that children receive excellent attention throughout the session and build strong relationships with the staff and each other. Children actively participate in the purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the harmonious atmosphere. Children have clear routines to their sessions and follow set procedures for certain activities which help them feel secure. Planning and assessment documentation refers to the 'Birth to three matters' framework and shows how the setting takes general heed of the guidance when working with children under the age of three years. Staff provide positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children. Staff encourage and build children's vocabulary through constant praise and recognition as they support play, skilfully adapting their level of language and questioning to reflect each child's stage of development. For example, a child showing interest in the building bricks is encouraged to build a tower containing five bricks in total.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All staff have a competent knowledge of the Foundation Stage and deliver a varied programme of play-based activities which provide an overall balance across all six areas of learning. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals given their ages and starting points. Children are happy and settle quickly in the gentle and nurturing environment. They generally display high levels of involvement and gain a sense of achievement, self-confidence and self-esteem through planned and spontaneously chosen activities. Older and more able children maintain their interest in the activities due to the skilful intervention of staff who re-direct their learning appropriately. Staff work together as a very effective and committed team deploying themselves to support children's learning with sensitivity and respect.

Planning builds on the Foundation Stage guidance. Staff are intuitively able to interpret the basic plan and adjust appropriately to the developmental stage of each child as they work. A half-term topic is identified and activities are planned to support the chosen theme. However, staff do not always refer to the full range of stepping stones as they work. The setting is not

using the stepping stones in a clear way to secure and progress the learning of some children in a consistent manner. Plans show a heavy focus upon the yellow and blue stepping stones. There is little differentiation on the planning sheets to address the needs of children who may learn at different rates. This means that children may not always access the appropriate stepping stones which reflect their current stage of development and ability. The setting makes observations of children's learning and records these in the same assessment system used by the school reception class staff. Although this provides a baseline assessment for the school, it does not enable children's progress to be tracked against the stepping stones throughout their time at the pre-school. The information gathered cannot easily be used to secure children's progression in learning and inform the next steps in the learning programme. The potential impact of weaknesses in the planning and assessment systems on the children is currently minimised by the efficient, practical teaching skills exhibited by the staff team and the small numbers of children attending the setting.

Staff use clear and highly-skilled teaching techniques which they confidently adapt to suit the various ages of children at this setting. Children enjoy good, trusting relationships with staff who get down to their level and engage in meaningful questioning, conversation and discussion which develops learning through play. Snack time is a positive and effective learning time for the children. Staff encourage the children to be independent. In response to a request to open various packets of crisps, a staff member opens the corner of each packet and suggests that the children then try to finish the task themselves. Children develop their hand-eye coordination as they pour their own drinks and make their selection of fruit. When asked to fasten shoes, staff show how to fasten one strap and then challenge the children to do the others.

Appropriate emphasis is given to the development of children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Children gain confidence to speak in front of a small group as they tell one another about their news and their friends learn to listen courteously. Children discuss the letter of the week and the sound it represents. Children learn to recognise their name card and share books with their friends. Children learn about numbers, use mathematical language and solve simple problems. Numbers and letters abound in this environment. For example, innovative use is made of the wire fencing in the garden area to weave cloth in the shape of numbers. Photographs inform parents and visitors, showing a wealth of interesting activities and the learning which was gained from them. For example, children employ design and making skills and listen to instructions in order to make 'Rainbow Streamers'. The activity also supports the development of children's fine manipulative skills and colour recognition. Photographs also show children participating in messy play and enjoying dragon dancing. They spread marmite on bread, grow cress and try to eat with chopsticks.

Children learn about basic information technology. For example, a display of computer drawn faces is labelled by the children's own writing. A wide range of construction toys enables children to build and fix pieces together, improving manual dexterity. Children enjoy a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities to promote physical development. They have free-flow play inside and out and benefit from an exciting, dedicated outdoor garden where they may enjoy fresh air whilst learning all year round. Children explore paint and print, using their own ideas to create their own pictures and freely access musical instruments. Children begin to use imagination playing alongside others in role play situations such as a shoe shop and ambulance play tent. Staff extend ideas as needed, model roles they might use, ensure all can join in and that children share resources fairly.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children and their families are treated with equal respect and concern and the pre-school reviews its equal opportunities provision regularly. All children are encouraged to participate in all activities. Children develop their understanding and appreciation of others through simple planned activities that promote a greater awareness of the wider world. Children participate in art and craft activities connected with celebrations and taste cultural foods. Positive images are displayed around the classroom and sufficient resources are in place to promote children's awareness of diversity.

Children who have varying needs receive good support. Children's individual needs are discussed with parents in detail. Any special requirements or information are discussed and consistent communication and information exchange takes place. Children's learning difficulties and disabilities are recognised and met sensitively. Children who may have learning difficulties receive appropriate intervention and referrals to suitable professionals outside the provision.

Staff provide excellent role models for children by being calm and polite. Staff praise children freely, ensuring that they develop confidence and self-esteem and understand when they have done well. Children are well-behaved in response to the consistent expectations of caring staff and any adverse behaviour is corrected using positive language. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff work really hard to develop a positive partnership with parents to support children's progress in learning. Parents may serve on the committee and can become involved in fund raising. Extensive information is available for parents on a daily basis, because the notice boards are used extremely well to display a wealth of information. Staff try to encourage a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise. Parents are warmly welcomed into the provision and are well-supported by staff during the settling-in process through induction sessions. Staff encourage parents to share information about their children and they are able to see their child's records and regularly contribute to them if they wish. When working well, this arrangement of two-way sharing benefits the child and enhances their learning. This underpins their progress in the pre-school and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is good.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Highly preferential staff to child ratios are maintained in this small group. Staff follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide effective support to draw the learning from play. The pre-school leader works alongside her assistant on a daily basis and, therefore, has a 'hands on approach' to every aspect of the pre-school operation. This promotes highly positive outcomes for children. Staff demonstrate a genuine affinity with children; they respect children's feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. Documentation is clear and generally accessible. Written policies and procedures have clearly defined aims which stress the welfare of the child. For example, the lost and uncollected child policy states that the purpose is 'to ensure a high standard of care whilst ensuring the child experiences as little distress as possible'.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The staff team are well-qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. The established

staff team are well-supported by the head teacher and the parent committee who oversee the management of the pre-school and this safeguards and promotes children's care and welfare. Staff are actively involved in planning and decision-making and contribute to the continuous monitoring of the setting through effective self-evaluation and reflection in line with 'Every Child Matters'. Staff clearly and confidently speak about their procedures to follow in the event of a range of scenarios. Planning and assessment systems continue to evolve, and increasingly secure and progress children's learning. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Four recommendations were raised at the last inspection of day care.

The pre-school was asked to consider the development of a sample menu to support the healthy eating plan. The group have produced sample menus as suggested and this has improved the sharing of information for parents. The pre-school was asked to continue to develop knowledge and understanding of risk assessments. The manager has attended a relevant health and safety training course and is now able to implement risk assessments confidently and with suitable frequency to ensure the safety of children and staff. An appropriate policy and procedure is now in place for lost or uncollected children to secure their welfare. Finally, the setting was asked to increase resources and activities to promote positive images. Additional resources have been purchased to enable children to develop their learning about the wider world. The actions taken by the pre-school have satisfactorily addressed the issues raised and improved the quality of care for children.

This is the first inspection of nursery education.

Complaints since the last inspection

In September 2005, concerns were raised about the behaviour of a staff member, the lack of confidentiality within the setting and staff qualifications. These concerns relate to National Standard 1 (Suitable Person), 2 (Organisation), 3 (Care, Learning and Play) and 12 (Partnership with Parents and Carers). Ofsted made an announced visit to the provision on the 12/09/2005 and as a result set four actions as follows:-

To ensure the manager holds at least a Level 3 qualification appropriate to the post, and that at least half of all childcare staff hold a Level 2 qualification appropriate for the care or development of children.

To make available to parents, a written statement that provides details of the procedure to be followed if they have a complaint and to demonstrate how staff respect and maintain privacy and confidentiality when addressing sensitive issues with parents.

To ensure that the regulatory body is kept informed of any changes in members of staff or committee and when significant events occur.

The provider remained qualified for registration.

A complaint was received by Ofsted in October 2006. A childcare inspector and team manager conducted an unannounced visit on 02/11/2006 to inspect against National Standard 1 (Suitable Person), 2 (Organisation), 3 (Care, Learning and Play) and 12 (Partnership with Parents and Carers). As a result of the visit one action was set in relation to National Standard 14 (Documentation) as follows:-

Ensure that all records which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision and to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained.

The provider remains qualified for registration.

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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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):

- ensure that the accident record contains all relevant details and is signed by the parent
- ensure that the system for registering children and staff attendance on a daily basis shows hours of attendance.

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 planning to ensure that children can access the appropriate stepping stones to secure and progress their learning appropriately
- ensure that the assessment system tracks children's progress through the stepping stones and provides information which can be used to determine the next steps in 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