

Thorpe le Soken Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	203779
Inspection date	13 November 2007
Inspector	Lynn Denise Smith
Setting Address	Little Saints House, Rolph School Grounds, High Street, Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, CO16 0DY
Telephone number	01255 863070
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Registered person	The Trustees of Thorpe-Le-Soken Pre-School Playgroup
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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Thorpe le Soken Pre-school is committee run by the Trustees of Thorpe le Soken Pre-school. It opened in 1971 and operates from a demountable classroom. It is situated within the grounds of a local primary school. A maximum of 22 children may attend at any one time. The pre-school is open from 08:50 to 11:50 and from 12:00 to 15:00 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursday and 08:50 to 11:50 on Fridays. All children share an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 55 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these, 31 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and surrounding areas.

The pre-school employs five staff. Four of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children are developing an excellent understanding about how to keep healthy as they follow the staff's clear and concise procedures. The pre-school is kept meticulously clean and staff take pride in ensuring the environment is safe and well maintained for young children. Children enthusiastically follow the effective hand washing procedures staff encourage when they have completed a messy activity, before they sit down for snack and when they have used the toilet. Staff act as excellent role models by wearing aprons to prepare snacks and washing their own hands before embarking on any medical procedures such as administering medication. Children independently use the two integral toilets and fun, colourful, hand-made posters remind them to wash their hands before continuing with their play.

Children's personal needs are superbly met as staff regularly change younger children's nappies and support those children who are using potties or require toilet seats. Their personal needs are discussed fully with their parents and staff acknowledge each child's individual stage of development.

Children's medical needs are effectively shared with staff as parents complete a comprehensive personal details form. Staff use this information to inform their practice and to ensure each child's needs are fully met. Children who feel unwell at the setting are comforted by warm and caring staff and their parents are contacted and encouraged to collect them. Children who require regular medication receive an effective and efficient approach from staff who follow the parent's wishes and the pre-school's written policies. Children who have accidents within the setting have their injuries dealt with by one of the fully qualified first aiders. A clear written record of their injuries is shared with their parents.

Children are extremely active and are encouraged to make full use of the newly renovated outdoor area throughout the sessions each day. They enjoy free flow play between the pre-school room and outdoor area and have an excellent understanding about why fresh air is good for us. The addition of a plastic roof to the outdoor area enables children to play outdoors in all kinds of weather.

Children enthusiastically enjoy a mid session snack of fresh fruit and a biscuit. They are encouraged to help set out the tables with enough cups for all of the children and a piece of kitchen roll for them to place their fruit on. Children have superb opportunities to develop their physical skills and independence as they pour their own drink of milk or water. They are able to drink as much as they want at snack time and also have free access to fresh drinking water throughout the session. Their environment is kept extremely hygienic as staff clean tables and table cloths with a germ killing spray in between each use. Children's individual dietary needs are communicated well to staff through the children's details forms. Staff have a strict no nut policy and demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the children who have allergies or intolerances to various foods.

Children have exciting opportunities to develop their physical skills both indoors and outdoors. They negotiate space well and understand that they need to walk carefully around the pre-school to prevent accidents. They learn to climb and manoeuvre through small spaces as they use the range of climbing frames and tunnels presented outdoors. They thoroughly enjoy participating in group music and movement sessions as they practice some active songs and rhymes for their Christmas show. They actively participate in parachute games and races when they play on the

school field. Children's fine motor skills are encouraged as they access an excellent selection of tools such as dough rollers and cutters, scissors, glue spreaders, puzzles and construction sets.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in an exciting and interesting environment. Their pre-school is made welcoming as staff present an extensive range of colourful posters and examples of the children's work on every inch of the walls. The windows are painted with bright poster paints and the décor within the pre-school building is regularly re-decorated to keep it fresh and clean. The children's play space is superbly organised with a range of low level storage containers and tables placed around the edge of the room to provide easy access to toys and to provide surfaces for staff to display items of interest. Six well-positioned, child height tables are placed at appropriate places within the play room to enable the children to move freely around the room and make good use of the resources on offer. Children make excellent choices about whether they play indoors or outdoors as they gain free access to the outdoor area through a door to the rear of the playroom.

Children safely access an extensive selection of toys and play materials, all of which are presented in low-level storage containers and drawers. Staff use their expert knowledge of the children's interests to provide a stimulating and appropriate range of resources. Children play with clean and hygienic toys as staff follow a clear and effective cleaning regime.

Children are extremely safe within this pre-school as staff demonstrate an excellent understanding about safety and have meticulous security procedures in place to protect children. Daily risk assessments carried out each morning ensure that the premises are safe and suitable for children. Regular fire evacuations are practised and a clear written log of how long the procedure took is available for inspection. Children's security whilst at the pre-school is expertly managed as staff continuously evaluate and amend their arrival and departure procedures to ensure children's safety. For example, they have recently introduced a system for the middle of the day when the morning children are leaving and the afternoon children are arriving which ensures that that all children are delivered and collected by their appropriate parent or carer. They use two doors and parents gather at the appropriate door to drop off or collect their children.

Children are superbly protected from potential harm as staff demonstrate a clear understanding about child protection issues. They regularly update their child protection knowledge through training courses and access a full range of written information and publications to inform their practices.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children have superb fun at this pre-school. They enthusiastically participate in a wide range of different activities and make excellent use of the extensive selection of toys and play materials available to them. Children are provided with fantastic opportunities to make choices over their play and learning throughout each session. They decide whether they are going to play indoors or outdoors during the free play sections of the morning and self-select resources both from the range set out for them and from additional toys which are stored in drawers and storage containers around the pre-school room.

Children develop excellent relationships with the staff. They approach them with ease and enjoy the cheerful and warm responses they receive from their carers. They are very affectionate towards each other and towards the staff. Children's language development is superbly extended and developed as staff encourage them to articulate their feelings when they tell their friends their news at circle time. Staff ask many open ended and appropriate questions to encourage children to stretch their thoughts and use new vocabulary.

An extremely clear and effective procedure for observing and recording children's progress and development is in place. All staff make daily observations of all children, these are collated until the end of the week when the children's individual key workers plot the observations of the children's progress files and consider each child's next step.

Children thoroughly enjoy expressing themselves through free painting, sticking and imaginative play. They freely access the various coloured paints on the appropriately sized easel and paint pictures of their choice. They proficiently tell others about their paintings and what colours they are using, for example, they paint pictures of 'Princesses' each with a different coloured dress. Children enthusiastically become other characters as they make use of the superb selection of dressing up clothes presented in the role play area. They take their new characters very seriously and a smartly dressed young police man tells the other children he is going to make sure they all behave themselves.

Younger children's needs are extremely well met as staff demonstrate a sound understanding about the needs of children aged under three years. They use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to effectively guide their planning and extend their knowledge of this age group by attending relevant training courses. All activities are adapted and differentiated to cover younger children's learning. Staff ensure appropriately sized equipment is available, for example, the painting easels are low enough to enable very small children to freely access this activity.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

Staff demonstrate an extensive understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. This is superbly evidenced in their planning and observations. All staff play an active role in the planning and work well together inputting ideas.

Excellent, clear and effective planning shows how staff provide activities which cover all of the aspects of the six areas of learning. Long, medium, short, weekly and daily plans are available for staff to work from and for parents and visitors to view. Daily activity plans show how staff differentiate to meet all children's needs and space is provided on the sheets for staff to evaluate the activities. Staff meet every week to discuss the following week's planning and to change or adapt anything they feel needs to be reviewed or added.

Children's learning is superbly challenged and extended as staff have a sound understanding about each child's stage of development. Age appropriate and focussed activities are planned into each session ensuring all children are appropriately challenged.

The setting benefits from a superbly planned and effective use of time throughout the session. Children are provided with lots of stimulating, meaningful free play for the first half of the session. They then participate in a focussed activity for approximately half an hour, then finish the session off with more organised group games. Each session is very varied and ties in very well with the planning.

Children learn in an extremely well-organised environment, staff demonstrate their sound confidence as they manage the session beautifully. Children concentrate well and are motivated to learn as the environment is stimulating, fun and exciting. The staff endeavour to provide a fully inclusive provision enabling all children to participate in all activities.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at pre-school. They form good relationships with each other and clearly enjoy each other's company. They chat freely with the staff and approach the staff with ease. Children concentrate for prolonged periods of time and are very motivated to learn. They help each other and co-operate well, for example, when clearing away the toys and co-operatively carrying the storage boxes back to their places.

Children are extremely confident speakers they use language effectively to articulate their feelings and to re-tell stories and events in their lives. Children thoroughly enjoy listening to stories both in large group situations and in smaller groups. They are provided with excellent opportunities to make marks in various places around the pre-school and are beginning to write for a purpose. They label toys which they bring in from home with their own names and write descriptions of construction models they have made.

Children's mathematical development is continuously extended as staff plan an appropriate range of activities which enable them to make use of mathematical equipment and to use numbers in everyday activities. They count the children present each day and use simple calculation to discover whether there are more boys than girls. Children have access to an excellent selection of posters and visual aids which enable them to learn about numbers and to recognise numerals in their play.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is superbly enriched as staff provide an extensive range of activities to enable them to explore their environment and the world around them. They are actively involved in a gardening project whereby they have planted a range of seeds and bulbs. They go on bug hunts around the school grounds to explore insects and nature. They enthusiastically explore the worms they find when they dig over a piece of ground to prepare it for spring bulbs. Children construct with an exciting range of materials. They use their imagination to build models from the plastic and wooden construction sets as well as building for a purpose when they access child sized tools and soft wood materials. Children's understanding of communication and information technology is extended as they have access to a laptop computer, V. Tec toys, remote control cars and mobile phones. Children learn about a sense of place and belonging as they go for walks in the local area. They go to the local butcher's and watch sausages being made and they go to local shops to purchase items for the pre-school. They visit a local farm to see the new born lambs.

Children enthusiastically join in with singing and music and movement sessions. They excitedly practice songs for their Christmas show. Children are encouraged to make their own creations and to interpret their own ideas through various crafts. Children have superb fun exploring a wide range of musical instruments. They participate in a range of songs to which they play their instruments and sing. They know when to play the instruments quietly and when to play them loud. Staff enthusiastically participate and guide the children to ensure that they benefit fully from this activity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual needs are at the forefront of practice within this pre-school. Staff use the written and verbal information provided by children's parents to fully inform their practices and to ensure they are providing a fully inclusive setting. Information sharing is ongoing and staff actively encourage parents to keep them up to date with any changes in the children's home lives.

Children play in an extremely rich environment which promotes equality of opportunity and diversity. An extensive range of posters and notices are displayed around the room which depict people of differing cultures and nationalities. The pre-school sponsors two children who live in Africa. A clear and effective display board shows the pre-school children whereabouts on the map of the world they live and informs them about their living conditions. Children have extensive opportunities to learn about other people's customs and religions as they actively celebrate a full range of festivals throughout the year. The equal opportunities co-ordinator within the setting ensures that staff are fully informed about the forthcoming celebrations and provides a good range of resources to enable them to celebrate them effectively.

Children are superbly valued within their pre-school and gain an excellent sense of belonging. They have individual coat pegs, recognise their names through a range of activities and share purposeful conversations with the staff about their siblings, pets and interests. Children who have achieved a goal outside of the pre-school are encouraged to tell their friends about it in the circle time, for example, when they achieve a swimming certificate. All children are encouraged to 'have a voice' within the setting and to share news and items of interest with the rest of the group.

Children develop an excellent understanding of their local community as they regularly participate in activities organised in the local area, such as the Harvest Festival at the local school or the village's Christmas market. Visitors to the setting extend children's knowledge of the jobs people do for example they have been visited by a police man, a nurse and the local lollipop Lady. Excellent links with the local school ensures a smooth transition between pre-school and school.

Children are encouraged to consider those less fortunate than themselves by raising funds to help other charities, for example, Children in Need and a charity raising funds for sufferers of Cancer. Staff expertly explain to the children why they are helping others.

When children within the setting are poorly or have hospital or doctor's appointments, they are encouraged to take the pre-school's caring puppet, Wendy with them to look after them. Their parents are encouraged to write a short log of the event for staff to share with the other children.

Children who have additional needs are superbly supported. Staff follow current guidelines for ensuring the setting is offering a fully inclusive provision for all children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as those with specific medical conditions. Staff work with the area SENCO to access all necessary support and appropriate equipment.

Children are extremely well behaved within this pre-school setting. They clearly understand the group's simple rules and follow the staff's positive directions. They are very caring and considerate towards each other and are often seen with their arms around each other, laughing and chatting confidently. An excellent adult to child ratio is in place each session which enables

children to receive good quality individual attention. Children have excellent opportunities to develop an understanding about sharing and taking turns through a wide range of activities, for example, they wait patiently for their turn to tell their friends their news at circle time.

Children's well-being is expertly promoted as the staff and parents work effectively together. They share relevant information on a daily basis and develop a close working relationship. Parents are provided with extensive written information about the setting which is presented in an interesting and informative way on display boards in the foyer. Parents are encouraged to play an active role in the way the setting operates by volunteering to work within the pre-school on the parents' rota and by completing evaluation forms.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding.

Children's welfare and education is superbly enriched as the staff and parents work effectively together. Staff show a high regard for parents' wishes and have extensive procedures in place for parents to share relevant information about their children's starting points and home achievements. Parents are well informed about their children's progress as they are invited to attend an open evening every half term to discuss their children's achievements and to look at their developmental records. They know that they can also have free access to these at any time.

Parents are superbly informed about the group's planning and future activities as staff display the planning on a notice board and inform them about forthcoming events through a newsletter system. They are actively encouraged to show an interest in the themes and topics being covered by helping their children to find an object from home which relates to the topic, for example, the colour of the week. Children are encouraged to take home one of the setting's many puppets. Their parents enthusiastically write a short log of the activities undertaken by their children and the puppet during his or her stay with the family.

Parents who provide feedback about the group during the inspection are extremely complimentary about the care and education their children are receiving. They share examples of knowledge their children have brought home to them about planting and growing and the digestive system which their children have shared with them following their pre-school sessions.

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

Children are very independent, they make excellent choices over their play and learning. Children are kind and caring towards each other and clearly enjoy the interaction they share with their friends and with the adults caring for them. They have superb opportunities to develop their understanding about other people and the ways in which they live through positive images in resources and through the celebration of special occasions.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children are superbly cared for by a caring and committed team of adults. The staff team has remained consistent for over three years, with the only change being the re-employment of a member of staff who left the group and has now returned. All of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications or are actively working towards gaining them. All staff are enthusiastically encouraged to further their knowledge and understanding of child care through

training courses and seminars. They participate in in-house training activities and receive support and guidance from professionals within the early years spectrum.

Robust procedures are in place to ensure that all staff are appropriately vetted and cleared before they begin working with the children and having unsupervised access. An effective induction procedure is in place which ensures that staff gain a clear understanding of the setting's practices.

Children benefit from being cared for in well-organised surroundings as staff present the space and equipment effectively. The routine to the morning provides children with a good amount of free play as well as some structured activities. They participate in activities in both large groups and smaller more focussed groups. An effective key-worker system is in place which ensures that children have a special member of staff to relate to who knows their individual needs and plots their progress effectively.

Children's attendance is effectively recorded as their parents sign them in and out of the setting. A daily register is also called at circle time to prepare the children for this practice when they go to school.

Extremely high standards of written procedures and documentation support the staff's practices within the setting. Staff efficiently follow the policies and parents are very well informed about the pre-school's day to day operations as they are provided with extensive information on the notice boards and through the regular newsletters. Documentation is stored effectively and confidentiality is maintained at all times.

The leadership and management is outstanding.

The pre-school is managed by a group of trustees, many of whom are now in their second year on the committee. Parents are very clear about who the trustees are and what role they play in the organisation of the setting, as the manager displays photographs of them on the notice board. The trustees meet on a regular basis to discuss the organisation of the setting. They all play an active role on the parent rota which enables them to gain first hand experience of how the pre-school operates.

The staff team work extremely well together. They are knowledgeable about their roles for the day as they follow the staff rota. Staff are valued and their individual interests are fostered by the manager who encourages them to play an active role in the planning and to make suggestions about activities and future developments. They meet on a weekly basis to plan for the following week using observations and evaluations of what has gone well and not so well.

Staff's professional development is considered high priority within this setting. They are actively encouraged to pursue their interests and any training which would benefit the group. The staff and management have clear plans for the future which include accessing training about the new Foundation Stage which is to be implemented next year and to continue evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of the care and education offered.

Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection, the setting was asked to review and update the child protection policy to include reference to the booklet 'What to do if you are worried a child is

being abused' and to develop the outdoor area as a learning environment. Children are now well-protected as the committee and staff have updated their child protection policy, obtained all relevant publications and ensured that staff have received updated training in line with changes to the local guidelines. Children are now provided with a stimulating and exciting outdoor learning environment which they access freely throughout the session.

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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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