

# Thundersley Methodist Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	650157
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 November 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Anne Daly
<b>Setting Address</b>	Kennington Avenue, Benfleet, Essex, SS7 4BS
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<b>Registered person</b>	Thundersley Methodist Preschool
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 inadequate – notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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?

Thundersley Methodist Pre-school is Committee managed. It opened in 1972 operating from the main hall, a smaller room and the large entrance area of the Methodist Church in Benfleet, Essex. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group opens three days a week during school term times. Session times are Mondays and Wednesdays from 09:15 until 11:45 and from 12:15 until 14:45 and Fridays between 09:15 and 11:45. All children are able to share an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 32 children from two to five years on roll. Of these, 22 children receive funding for nursery education. Children from the local community and surrounding areas attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school can support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also children who have English as a second language.

The pre-school employs seven staff. All hold early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority and from the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PSLA).

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is inadequate.

Children's welfare is not being protected as staff are administering medication to them without their parents' or carers' written permission. This is a breach of regulation.

Children's accidental injuries are being effectively managed by some of the staff holding current first aid qualifications and therefore being aware of how to correctly handle such injuries. Accident records are being appropriately maintained and parents and carers give their written permission for staff to act in children's best interests by seeking immediate emergency medical advice or treatment. The setting's written sickness policy is being shared with parents and carers to prevent the spread of infection by ensuring that they know when to keep their unwell children at home.

Children remain healthy through beginning to show good levels of understanding of simple health and hygiene practices, such as using individual hand towels following washing their hands with liquid soap after using the toilet. Some children understand why poor hygiene may affect their health and know that their hands may carry germs. Staff follow sound procedures for handling body fluids, such as wearing disposable gloves when changing nappies and disinfecting mats after use to minimise the risk of cross-infection to children.

Children's individual dietary needs are being well met through staff requesting information from their parents and carers about any dietary requirements and allergies. Children are able to make decisions about when they wish to drink through water being freely available throughout sessions to avoid them becoming dehydrated. They are beginning to understand the types of food linked to a healthy lifestyle through the provision of varied snacks, such as fresh fruit and toast.

Children are being given good opportunities for exercise and physical play to contribute to their good health. The outdoor area is being utilised in all but the worst weather to enable them to benefit from fresh air. They use their muscles and are developing control over their bodies when stretching or crouching down to 'paint' the paving slabs with water. They skilfully use wheeled toys by pedalling or scooting around the indoor playroom, moving backwards or forwards around obstacles. Children's best interests are being considered by being able to rest in the cosy book corner when necessary.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is inadequate.

Children are not being fully safeguarded as Ofsted has not undertaken all relevant checks on the registered person to ensure their suitability to be responsible for the care of children. A designated member of staff has attended child protection training and staff are aware of their responsibilities if they have concerns for children at risk by reporting any concerns to the relevant authorities. However, the committee members have not adopted the pre-school's child protection statement, resulting in them potentially being unaware of their responsibilities to fully protect children. This statement is based on 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused', but staff are unable to access this guidance, although a flowchart is available.

Children are welcomed into safe and secure premises, where staff set out equipment prior to their arrival. Some children's work is displayed at various levels to create a welcoming

environment for them and to promote their self-esteem. They can freely select from a good range of toys and equipment to successfully promote their individual developmental needs. Toys are clean and are regularly checked by staff for damage prior to use by children. Appropriate child-sized tables and chairs enable children to play in comfort.

Children are reminded by staff to tidy away toys after playing to prevent tripping hazards. There are procedures to ensure the safe arrival and collection of children. Fire evacuation drills are being regularly practised to ensure that all children and staff know what to do to keep themselves safe in an emergency. Staff read stories to children to help them to understand about safety issues outside the pre-school, for example, how they should fasten their seat belts in an aeroplane and should not stand too close to the moving luggage conveyer belt.

Daily written risk assessments and procedures for the premises help staff to safeguard children from potential hazards. There are good, well-practised routines and procedures for the movement of children around the setting, for example, they are always escorted by staff for their protection when leaving the main hall to use other parts of the premises.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children arrive happy and eager to participate, playing well together and developing warm and trusting relationships with the caring staff. They build on their natural curiosity as learners through playing and discovering new ideas and experiences in both planned and spontaneous activities. They are acquiring new knowledge and skills while investigating what happens when watching ice melt. They are purposefully engaged throughout sessions, working and playing enthusiastically, either alone or with others. They are beginning to distinguish right from wrong and are forming positive relationships through staff setting consistent boundaries and appropriately supporting them to develop their skills. Children show interest in what they are doing and respond to simple instructions, for example, when mixing paint. Staff provide children with opportunities and time to use their language skills, for example, by having small group story times to enable all to have an opportunity to talk about their aeroplane journeys. Children receive appropriate praise and encouragement from staff to help to promote their positive attitudes.

Younger children's individual needs are being met through staff ensuring that children enjoy and share stories in small groups and have physical activities which they particularly enjoy, for example, playing outside with pull-along toys.

### **Nursery Education.**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a sound understanding of the stepping stones to enable them to plan a varied and balanced range of activities covering all six areas of learning. They know the children well as the majority of them attend the pre-school prior to receiving funding for nursery education, resulting in staff being fully aware of their starting points. Children's learning is not yet fully supported by effective two-way communication with parents and carers to enable them to contribute to their children's assessment records and to support their learning at home. Staff use long, medium and short term planning, including the local environment as a source of learning. They invite people from the local community, such as the librarian and the school crossing patrol person, into the pre-school to further children's knowledge. The planning details the main learning intentions for the week and includes some differences in relation to children's abilities. The daily evaluation by staff of

what children can do guides future planning. Plans do not always direct staff to ask key questions, reinforce key words or record how activities may be adapted to suit different levels of ability. Potentially children may not be effectively challenged to make progress in their learning. Individual educational plans set clear targets for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including how staff will support the children to achieve their individual targets. A varied and suitable range of teaching methods is being used, including encouraging children to try by, where appropriate, working alongside them to check whether they are acquiring the necessary skills to enable them to progress towards the early learning goals.

Staff manage children's behaviour by providing a learning environment which is developing their understanding of right and wrong, for example, children knowing how many of them can play at certain activities at any one time. Children are fully engaged throughout sessions by having access to a varied range of resources to support their learning and play. They are able to consolidate their learning through daily core activities, such as role and small world play and sand. Staff ask open-ended questions to encourage children's language development, for example, 'why do you think the ice is melting?'. Staff assess and record children's achievements weekly against the stepping stones in all six areas of learning.

Children are being given many opportunities to develop their attitudes and dispositions to enable them to achieve in their learning. They show a positive approach to choosing their own activities and form good relationships with adults and other children as staff provide good support with their play by chatting with them on their pretend outings. Children are becoming increasingly independent through staff encouragement to attempt new skills and to gain proficiency, for example, by putting on and fastening their coats.

Children look at books on their own or in small groups with staff. They confidently join in with stories by anticipating what may happen next. They explore and experiment with words and sounds. More able children are beginning to understand rhythm in the spoken word by staff saying a word and encouraging them to say a rhyming word. Children can recognise their names when self-registering and staff provide them with many opportunities to mark-make, for example, with chalks, crayons, paints and in sand. Children listen to sounds and are able to match what they hear to the relevant picture on the cards.

Children's enquiring minds are being challenged by mathematical problems and tasks. They use mathematical language, such as circles and squares, and more able children can easily count to ten and some much higher when counting the number of bricks in their towers. They also show great interest in shapes when building trains and towers with wooden bricks. They can describe why shapes are the same and why some are different, such as big and little rectangles. They have numerous opportunities to develop and refine many skills at the activity easel, for example, sorting small pegs into colours before putting them into the respective numbers or turning cog wheels to enable counters to reach the bottom of the easel. Children show interest when looking at and recognising numbers while completing a clock jigsaw puzzle. They use everyday positional language during their imaginary role play, for example, 'mummy is in the front of the car' and 'I am the little boy, I am sitting in the back'.

Children are learning about the world they live in through staff planning a varied range of practical experiences. They have some opportunities to find out about and to identify the use of everyday technology. They are able to confidently demonstrate how to operate simple equipment, such as by pressing buttons on the pretend telephone. They have some opportunities to use the computer to demonstrate their skills when following simple educational programmes. The computer is set up to encourage them to complete educational games, for example, a

certificate is printed on completion to promote their self-esteem and confidence. Children explore living things and objects, for example, by watching the frogspawn change into tadpoles.

Children are able to be creative by expressing their own ideas and thoughts through art, music, role play and imaginative play. Staff allow sufficient time and freedom for the expression of ideas and thoughts when creating different Christmas stockings. However, staff use pre-prepared cut-out shapes of toys and there are a few opportunities for more able children to develop cutting skills. Children explore the changes when mixing together red and blue paint and when watching the changing patterns when pulling wheeled toys.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities to help them to develop their confidence and skills when using both large and small apparatus, tools and equipment. They confidently manipulate materials and objects by picking up, arranging and threading beads. They thoroughly enjoy exploring with malleable materials and are being introduced to the use of manipulation language, such as patting, poking and pinching.

Staff work closely as a team, praising and encouraging to develop children's personal independence and to support their learning.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is inadequate.

Children's welfare and well-being are potentially being compromised as the registered person and staff are not fully aware of the Children Act Regulations in relation to their responsibilities to investigate and record complaints. This is a breach of regulation.

Children feel secure and valued at the setting. They are being cared for by staff working with parents and carers to meet their individual needs and to ensure that they are fully included in the life of the pre-school. Children feel a sense of belonging when finding their names on entering the hall. During the majority of the morning, children are able to make choices and decisions, for example, deciding with what they will play and when they will have their snacks. This freedom enables the children to complete their chosen activities.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are able to confidently speak and relate to staff, visitors and other children. They have some opportunities to learn about the wider society through topics and projects on other countries to foster respect for different beliefs, cultures and traditions, for example, discussing the food to be taken to the temple during Diwali. Good quality equipment and resources ensure that children are learning to value and respect each other's similarities and differences, especially people with disabilities.

The appointed co-ordinator is enthusiastic about her role to support children's individual needs. She understands the importance of liaising with parents, seeking advice from professionals and attending any necessary training to maximise each child's developmental progress. Staff demonstrate how children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are greatly valued, respected and fully integrated into the pre-school. All children are well supported by all staff being involved and aware of the procedures for identifying, assessing and making provision for them. The appointed co-ordinator works closely with the area special educational needs advisor and other agencies to ensure that children's best interests and individual needs are being fully considered.

Children benefit from the staff team working together to provide consistent behaviour management support for them. Children are beginning to develop their understanding of emotions, such as being kind, taking turns and sharing with others. They are aware of the pre-school's routines and procedures and so know what is expected of them, for example, disposing of their wipes into the bin before sitting at the snack table. However, children's welfare is not being fully considered as the setting's behaviour statement does not have regard for bullying.

Children benefit from a trusting and mutually supportive partnership with parents and carers, who receive information about their children's care through a prospectus and termly newsletters. They also receive some verbal feedback at the beginning and end of each day. They share information prior to placement regarding their children's individual care needs, with individual written plans being devised when appropriate. These plans help to promote continuity of care with regard to managing children's medical or dietary needs.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is satisfactory. There is a regular exchange of information and relationships between staff and parents are friendly and helpful. Parents are kept informed about the setting through newsletters and are able to contribute to sessions by their children bringing items from home to 'show and tell'. Assessment records are being maintained and are made available if a parent enquires about their children's progress or achievements. However, staff do not provide regular opportunities for parents and carers to share in their children's records of assessment to ensure that they are fully informed about their children's progress towards the early learning goals. Such records are given to parents and carers when their children leave the setting, but they are not being kept fully informed of their children's next steps in learning while at the setting. Parents value the efforts of the staff team, who they find friendly and approachable, by speaking positively about them and appreciating the care and individual attention given to their children.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

Overall children's needs are not met. The registered person has not notified Ofsted of the committee members and has not submitted declaration and consent forms to enable Ofsted to undertake all the necessary checks to ensure deemed qualified to provide day care for children. This is a breach of regulation.

Children are cared for by staff who have been vetted by the local authority or Ofsted, but the vetting procedure for new staff is insufficiently robust to fully protect children.

Staff's organisation of the play space provides children with free-flow access and enables them to make selections about their play and learning. Children are cared for by a sensitive and supportive staff team, who have worked at the setting for many years. However, there is no key worker system to ensure that particular members of staff are responsible for a child's well-being on a daily basis and to ensure that information about a child is being exchanged with their parent or carer.

The registered person cannot demonstrate to Ofsted that the manager's qualification and subsequent training enables her to have the appropriate skills and ability to do her job for the benefit of the children. All staff hold early years qualifications and attend some short training courses to keep updated on current childcare issues and trends. The operational plan has not been updated to reflect the changing needs of staff and children, to explain to the manager

and staff how the registered person expects the pre-school to operate and how resources are to be used to meet children's needs.

Records relating to individual children are maintained, but their health is being compromised as the registered person and the manager are not ensuring the maintenance of all required documentation. Staff do not have copies of the National Standards or Ofsted's guidance to enable them to know what is needed to ensure compliance with the Children Act Regulations, especially relating to the vetting of staff, medication records and how to deal with complaints. Child protection, equal opportunities, special needs and behaviour management statements are in place, but they have not been adopted by the committee to ensure the safe and efficient running of the pre-school and to promote positive outcomes for children.

The leadership and management of the funded nursery education provision is satisfactory. The manager monitors the planning of the curriculum and, when necessary, seeks advice from the local authority and the Pre-school Learning Alliance. However, she has not attended post-qualification courses to update her knowledge and understanding of nursery education to ensure the effective monitoring of the implementation of the curriculum for the foundation stage. She delegates the overall responsibility for the planning of the Nursery Education to two staff members, although all staff are involved in the planning and the delivery of the curriculum in all six areas of learning. There are clear aims for children's learning, although the planning does not always include how staff can adapt activities to suit all children's ages and differing abilities. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities for the delivery of nursery education and are committed to improving the education for all children by acting upon any advice received from the local authority.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection on 24 September 2004, the registered provider was issued with five actions to improve the standards of care.

An action was raised to ensure that Ofsted is informed of changes to staff and committee members and to retain evidence that all have been vetted. This has not been met as Ofsted has not been notified of the committee members, resulting in required checks not being undertaken to ensure that they are suitable to manage a child care setting.

An action was raised to produce an action plan detailing how the person in charge will achieve a level 3 qualification appropriate to the post. This has not been met as the manager was unaware of the action she needed to take and the committee has not ensured compliance with the action. Children are therefore being cared for by a manager who may not be sufficiently qualified to ensure that their best interests are being maintained.

An action was raised to devise a policy that includes procedures to be followed in the event of a child being lost or uncollected. This has been met, although the policy does not fully ensure that staff are aware of the actions to be taken to fully safeguard children.

An action was raised to produce a risk assessment of the premises, which is regularly reviewed, identifying action to be taken to minimise identified risks. This has been fully met by staff now undertaking daily risk assessments to ensure the safety of children.

The last action relating to children's care was to ensure that the child protection procedure included steps to be taken in the event of an allegation about a member of staff. This has been met, although the policy has not been adopted by the committee and parents and carers are



not being advised of the updated child protection statement. Potentially children are at risk of not being fully safeguarded if there are concerns for their welfare or the care being provided by staff.

In addition, three recommendations were issued: to update the registration system to include times of arrival and departure of children and staff; to obtain written parental permission for staff with relevant training to administer first aid and to devise and implement policies on the management of behaviour and the administration of medication, which are understood by staff and parents.

There is now a registration system including the arrival and departure of children and staff to ensure the maintenance of correct adult:child ratios and the safety of children by the maintenance of a full list of adults and children on the premises in the event of an emergency. Staff can now act in children's best interests following an accident as they have written parental permission to administer first aid. There is now a statement to ensure consistency in the management of behaviour, but it does not include actions to be taken to fully safeguard children if they are being bullied. Children's welfare is still not being protected as staff are administering medication to them without their parents' or carers' written permission, although there is a medication policy in place.

The last educational inspection took place on 11 February 2005 and the registered provider was issued with two key issues.

The first key issue related to developing a formal system for monitoring and evaluating the provision for nursery education. The setting was required to consider how more use could be made of the outdoor area and how activities could be adapted to provide more challenge for the older or more able children. A formal system for monitoring and evaluating the provision for nursery education has been developed following advice from the local authority. The outdoor area is now being utilised daily by set outdoor activities being included in the weekly planning to enable children to benefit from fresh air. Activities are now being adapted to provide more challenge for the older or more able children, although further improvements are required to fully meet children's individual needs.

The second key issue related to developing the children's assessment records to ensure that they link to the stepping stones and all aspects of learning. The registered provider was required to ensure that staff date their observations of children's achievements and consider how the children's progress towards the early learning goals could be shared more formally with parents. Staff now weekly maintain and date children's assessment records linked to the stepping stones and all aspects of learning. Children's progress towards the early learning goals is now being shared more formally with parents, although they do not fully meet children's individual needs by enabling parents and carers to contribute to their learning.

### **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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- obtain prior written permission from parents for administering medication to children
- ensure that the registered person is able to put the setting's child protection procedures into practice to fully safeguard children
- review and update the behaviour management statement to ensure that it includes bullying
- review and update the complaints procedure in line with the Children Act Regulations
- ensure that all committee members have submitted to the appropriate vetting procedures
- demonstrate to Ofsted how the manager's qualification is appropriate to her post
- review and develop the operational plan and ensure that it is made available to parents and carers
- ensure that all managers, staff and volunteers have the appropriate experience, skills and ability to do their jobs, with particular attention to staff's knowledge and understanding of the National Standards and associated guidance.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

#### The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop the activity plans to include the key questions and associated vocabulary and how activities will be adapted to suit children of all ages and differing abilities
- provide opportunities for parents and carers to share in their children's records of assessment to ensure that they are kept fully informed about their children's progress towards the early learning goals.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)