

St Thomas Aquinas After School Project

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	141788
Inspection date	24/03/2009
Inspector	Hugh Protherough
Setting address	St Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic School, St Mary's Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK3 5DT
Telephone number	01908 373977
Email	
Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration whichever is the later, which require Ofsted or the provider to take action in Annex C.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

Children only attend this setting before and/or after the school day and/or during the school holidays. The judgements in this report reflect the quality of early years provision offered to children during those periods.

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

St Thomas Aquinas After School Project is registered on the Early Years Register, compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It operates from two halls in St Thomas Aquinas School in Bletchley, Milton Keynes. There are currently 60 children on roll for the after school project. Children attend a variety of sessions. The group is experienced in providing a service for children with special educational needs. Although the majority of pupils attending the after school project are of White British origin, the range of ethnic groups represented is increasingly diverse. Most children are competent speakers of English. The group opens from 15:00 – 18:00 during term time and 8:00 – 18:00 in the school holidays. Six members of staff work with the children during term time. The manager holds a NVQ Level 4 and her deputy a Cache Level 3. A third assistant holds a NVQ Level 2 and is being assessed for Level 3. The rest of the team all hold Cache Level 2. A vacancy for a seventh staff member has been advertised. New premises are under construction on the school site and will be completed by Easter 2009.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of the provision is good. This is an effective, well managed play scheme that caters well for the needs of the children in its care. The ongoing training and development of the staff team and the increasing range and variety of activities provided are positive indicators of the good capacity for continuous improvement. The After School Project strongly promotes inclusive practice in its provision through, art, music and food that reflect the backgrounds of the children and the wider world. However the detail of the languages spoken at home is not yet systematically recorded.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- improve the detail of the profiles of the children attending the scheme, by establishing the languages they speak at home
- ensure that the centre's evaluation of its work is more sharply focused upon the impact of provision on children's learning and development

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The after school project is well led and effectively managed. All adults have clearly defined responsibilities that they know, understand and carry out conscientiously. As a result the after school project runs smoothly and the children say they feel safe, happy and well cared for.

Clear policies and procedures are in place to support children's safety and welfare.

There are secure systems for the safe recruitment and vetting of those working directly with the children. There are good arrangements for gathering information from parents, regarding children's specific needs, such as dietary requirements, religious and cultural backgrounds. This ensures children's individual needs are met and inclusive practice is promoted. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are carefully monitored and well supported.

The day to day provision is carefully planned to offer a wide variety of interesting activities that cater effectively for the needs and interests of the children. The weekly timetable is prominently displayed in order that children know what is on offer. Their ideas and suggestions are welcomed by staff and the written evaluations completed by each child are used to inform the discussions held by staff at their weekly staff meeting. From this the staff can glean a range of information; from which snack menus are most popular to the extent that children are enjoying their outdoor play.

Parents are kept well-informed. The inspector observed many informal conversations between staff and parents and carers coming to collect their children. A parents' notice-board provides a good variety of information and includes a folder of the scheme's policies and procedures. This is further augmented by newsletters and details of the holiday club outings.

The manager has made a good start at evaluating the work of the after school project and has begun to complete the self-evaluation form. She has a good appreciation of the many strengths of current provision and describes these convincingly. However, the evaluation of the impact of what is provided on the children's development is not yet a consistent feature.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children arrive happily from their lessons and settle well within this friendly environment. Adults are always on hand to welcome them and the halls are prepared with a good range of equipment and resources so children can swiftly settle to purposeful play and activity.

Adults take care to ensure they work alongside groups and individuals throughout each session. They provide a well balanced timetable that ensures a good mix of activities. Particular care is taken to ensure that all children take some form of physical exercise during the session. This includes opportunity for more boisterous games for pupils who enjoy ball games as well as climbing and the use of small wheeled vehicles for the younger ones. Children benefit greatly from these group games and activities, where they take turns and develop positive attitude towards teamwork and sharing. These also contribute well to their physical development and health.

Indoor activities are often thoughtfully based around a theme. Several children told the inspector about their celebration of the Chinese New Year. Current work is focusing upon a celebration of diversity. The children have made plaster masks of

faces from different ethnic groups and are now working with an adult to construct a hanging mobile to display them. At the same time other children are practising cutting and sticking, constructing model frogs from green paper. Children make good use of the computer games and the construction toys. Older children frequently play chess and other board games and, when homework builds up, sometimes start work on this too. All of these activities contribute strongly to children's good enjoyment and achievement.

Children's health is well supported because they are conscientious about personal hygiene. They follow daily routines of washing hands before they have their evening tea. The weekly menu reflects well balanced meals prepared by staff, including fresh fruits and vegetables. The few children under five can sometimes be tired after a full day at school, but as one said, 'I feel OK because if I need to I can always lie down on the cushions in the quiet area.'

Children are well behaved. They are aware of the rules and any difficulties are managed effectively by staff using age-appropriate methods that reinforce positive models of behaviour. Children get on well with each other and enjoy the opportunity to mix with children of different ages. Staff encourage children to think of others and help tidy up towards the end of the session.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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Annex C: complaint/s made to Ofsted

This section of the report includes details of any complaint/s made to Ofsted when:

- we took action for the provider to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- we asked the provider to take action in order to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- the provider had already taken any necessary action to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register.

We will not report on any complaint where the provider met the requirements of the Early Years Register or did not require any action by Ofsted or the registered provider.

Detail of the complaint/s

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 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.