

# St Thomas Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	251662
<b>Inspection date</b>	24/04/2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Deirdra Keating
<b>Setting address</b>	St Thomas Church Hall, Bramford Lane (North West), Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 5BS
<b>Telephone number</b>	07969948975
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Type of setting</b>	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 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).

## **Description of the setting**

St Thomas Playgroup is run by a voluntary management committee. It opened in 1968 and operates from three rooms in a church hall. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The playgroup is situated in a residential area in Ipswich. It is open on Monday and Wednesday from 09.15 until 11.45 and 12.25 until 14.55; a lunch club operates on a Monday and Wednesday from 11.45 until 12.25. The group is also open on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 09.15 until 11.45.

The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 26 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 44 children aged from two to under five years on roll, some in part-time places. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

There are eight members of staff, six of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least NVQ Level 2 and two who are working towards a qualification. The setting provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds.

## **Overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Overall the quality of the provision is good. Children are warmly welcomed and their needs are met well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff are qualified, suitable and written procedures ensure that children's individual needs are met. The staff promote an inclusive environment in which all children and their families are valued. Effective partnership working with parents and local schools ensures that all children can fully participate in the setting and make good progress in their learning and development.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?**

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

- ensure that written risk assessments identify all risks and include all areas of the environment
- review the organisation of the end of the session to ensure every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience that is tailored to meet their individual needs.

## **The leadership and management of the early years provision**

The management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is promoted by the maintenance of policies, procedures and record systems. The group is managed by a play leader who works closely with the voluntary management committee. The staff team work very well together to promote a safe and welcoming environment for the children which has to be set up on a daily basis. The group have the use of

a large church hall, incorporating three rooms and an outdoor area. The building is used by other users and requires effective risk assessments to ensure children's ongoing safety. These have been devised and are recorded, however, they do not clearly identify all risks. Children are protected from potential harm and fully safeguarded by effective written procedures and trained vigilant staff.

The dedicated staff and committee strive for improvement and have targeted plans well towards securing new premises. In addition improvements to resources and practice have been highlighted using the self-evaluation form. Feedback from parents is sought in questionnaires to monitor practice and target specific areas. Staff work hard to ensure that good systems of communication are established with parents and carers from the start. They conduct home visits to children prior to them starting and ask parents for photographs from home. This encourages children to talk about their home lives and helps them develop a sense of belonging in the group.

The group have established links with local providers and schools. Staff and parents take children to the local nursery to visit prior to transition into school. Staff promote an inclusive environment, they are flexible and welcoming in their approach and ensure that the environment is effective in enabling all children to achieve.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision**

Children are able to make choices in their learning from the very good range of activities that are set out to look inviting and attract their attention. Tactile staff provide good one-to-one support as new children arrive and say goodbye to their parents. Children engage fully in imaginative play on the floor; staff support their play with lively and encouraging interventions enhancing their experiences and building on their ideas. Children are becoming increasingly independent; they register their names for snack, making choices about whether they are hungry and thirsty and choosing what to have from the range of healthy choices. The relaxed ongoing snack times sits very nicely in the session allowing children to sustain long periods of uninterrupted free play. The children are strongly supported and encouraged to develop their skills at snack time, they are offered a choice of milk, water or squash which they can pour from small jugs. Fresh fruit is offered and children peel fresh bananas, tangerines and count out savoury biscuits.

The indoor and outdoor environments have been linked well so that children have free contact with the outside world, enjoying fresh air and exercise daily. Children choose to spend a good deal of time outside where they can explore using all of their senses, they use dry sand and add water to make sandcastles and paint with water. Ride-on toys and wheeled toys are also available. This area is not specifically designed for children but managed well by staff who value the outdoor environment and take out all areas of the indoor environment. This enables children to participate in a range of activities outside where their interests and curiosity is enhanced.

Children are offered lots of tactile and exploratory play. They thoroughly enjoy

exploring mashed potatoes and water using a range of kitchen tools. They play harmoniously in small groups as they discuss the textures and what happens when they add more liquid. They learn new words as they talk about their home lives and work cooperatively as a group, taking turns with equipment and showing respect for one another. Staff help children learn how to conduct themselves safely within the group by moving safely. They also develop an understanding of danger and learn how the emergency services work through visits organised by staff, which include the fire brigade, ambulance and police. Children are making good progress in their communication, language and literacy. They link magnetic wooden letters to phonic sounds as they listen to initial letter sounds and recognise letter sounds of significance to them. They learn about syllables through the use of shaker instruments and sound out their names with enthusiasm.

The organisation of the session provides children with a balance of stimulating activities where they enjoy plenty of choice and make decisions about their learning. However, at the end of the session as staff prepare for parents to arrive and pack equipment away, children sit for long periods in a large group and some become restless and distracted. Parents are warmly welcomed and given a good range of information about the group, including children's key person staff member. Staff value parents input and their specific cultural expertise is used to enrich all children's learning experiences. Children's learning is documented and collated in 'learning journeys' which are shared with parents who are encouraged to make their comments and support children's learning at home.

## 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

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

### Leadership and management

<b>How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	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

<b>How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?</b>	2
<b>How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?</b>	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

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