

St Thomas' Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Patricia Mary Champion

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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*.

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Description of the setting

St Thomas' Pre-school opened in 2006 and is one of two settings run by a private partnership. The pre-school operates from the church hall behind St Thomas' Church set in a rural location in Noak Hill, Romford in the London borough of Havering. All children share access to a secure, enclosed, outdoor play area. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday during school term times. Session times are from 9.30am until 12.30pm. The pre-school runs a carer and toddler group on Thursday afternoon from 1.00pm until 2.30pm.

There are currently 34 children aged from two to five years on roll. Children aged three and four years receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school serves the local community and surrounding areas. The setting supports a small number of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who have English as an additional language. This provision is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register.

The pre-school employs seven staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is also one student currently working towards a recognised early years qualification acting as a volunteer. The setting receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Staff have developed a good knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and interact well with all the children. They create an interesting and generally safe environment while encouraging children's independence and curiosity to learn. Children are recognised and valued as individuals and the written policies and procedures generally underpin the efficient running of the setting. The use of reflective practice and self-evaluation by the staff team ensures that any priorities for development are promptly acted on. The partnership with parents and the local schools is a strength of the setting and contributes to children making good progress.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- review and update the written policies and procedures to ensure that they reflect current practice and link to the Early Years Foundation Stage
- ensure that the risk assessment covers anything with which a child comes into contact in the churchyard nature area
- review further the methods of recording children's progress to ensure that observations clearly indicate 'what next' for individuals.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

There are very effective staffing levels and the staff are well qualified and committed to their ongoing professional development. They are very capably managed and work effectively as a team, which has a very positive impact on outcomes for children. Children are safeguarded by the staff's sound grasp of child protection issues and there are robust recruitment procedures to ensure that staff working with the children are suitable to do so. Staff keep accurate records within registers and accident logs, which ensures children's welfare and safety. However, some of the written policies and procedures do not yet reflect current practice or link to the EYFS. Full risk assessments are undertaken and daily safety checks are carried out regarding the premises and outdoor area to the rear of the hall. Although children are closely supervised at all times, they may not be fully protected from all potential hazards as staff do not complete the risk assessment prior to using the nature garden in the churchyard.

The staff team are committed and enthusiastic in creating a welcoming, stimulating and inclusive environment for children. There is a clear policy regarding equality of opportunities and children learn about wider society through using a range of play materials that promote diversity. Activities are planned to familiarise children with their own cultures and those of others. Children have easy access to a wide range of resources and equipment, including natural materials, such as leaves and fir cones and they delight in selecting additional materials to extend their play and learning.

Self-evaluation involves everyone connected to the pre-school and children and parents are consulted about many aspects. The sessions are monitored and evaluated every day, staff review the success of activities and staff performance is reviewed through yearly appraisals. In acting on the recommendations raised at the last inspection, enhancing practice and improving routines and procedures for assessing children's progress, the pre-school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve further.

Children benefit from the effective partnership between the parents and staff. Information is shared in a variety of ways, including newsletters, notice boards and home links books. Staff regularly ask parents to update them on children's interests and progress to ensure that they can continue to fully meet their needs. Parents are involved in the children's learning by contributing items on the wish lists or attending Christmas and Easter craft workshops. Staff respond to the parents' views and suggestions resulting from regular questionnaires. This close working relationship with parents and the effective partnership with other agencies enhance the care of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who speak English as an additional language. Links with local schools ensures that children confidently enter full-time education and the carer and toddler group provides a good transition opportunity for new starters. Parents speak very positively about the staff team and value the way they help the children

settle into the pre-school and appreciate the exciting range of outdoor activities they plan.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

All the children make good progress in their learning and development because of broad and engaging practical activities, sensitive care and support, and a very conducive environment. Children take a full part in the shaping of their morning and caring for the environment, selecting activities and helping to tidy and wash up. They relish the opportunity to freely choose whether to play indoors or outside. Children are all well prepared for later life and learning because of their accomplishments, responsible behaviour and good levels of independence and confidence. Within a few weeks of starting in the pre-school, quite young children have settled and are eager to join in the learning experiences. Staff make ongoing observations of each child's progress and are able to use the EYFS to accurately assess children's level of achievement. Staff react quickly to ensure that activity planning is securely based on children's ideas, interests, capabilities and enthusiasms. However, the observations in the children's development records do not yet clearly indicate 'what next' for individuals.

Children are well behaved and good at sharing and taking turns. They have good relationships with each other and play happily together as they take part in role-play scenarios. For example, they take turns making and stirring the porridge as they imaginatively act out the story of 'Goldilocks and the three bears'. They use mathematical language as they discuss the sizes of spoons, bowls and chairs. There are plenty of books and mark-making materials adjacent to activities to develop literacy and writing skills and encourage reading for pleasure. Children demonstrate their technology skills as they adeptly use the touch pad on the laptop to control the cursor on the computer screen. The outdoor area and churchyard garden are used well to develop children's knowledge of the natural world. Observation, investigation and communication skills are promoted as conversations centre on describing what they find on nature trails. Staff use carefully formed questions to elicit some very interesting answers from the children.

Children develop very positive attitudes to developing healthy lifestyles through eating nutritious snacks and engaging in vigorous active play outside. Good hygiene routines are observed and older children demonstrate to new starters how to wash their hands before snack time. Children are very aware of their own and each other's safety, taking care as they ride the bikes or use tools, such as scissors with great care. Visitors to the setting also encourage awareness of safety issues and potential dangers. For example, a school crossing patrol officer visits the children to promote sensible road sense. Other visitors invited to enhance children's knowledge and understanding of the world include a policeman, doctor, musician and librarian.

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

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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