

St Thomas Methodist Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	106042
Inspection date	10/11/2009
Inspector	Rachael Williams

Setting address	St Thomas Methodist Churchhall, Cowick Street, Exeter, Devon, EX4 1JE
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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 Methodist Pre-school is managed by a voluntary committee and was first registered at the current setting in 1993. The Pre-school operates from the ground floor rooms of St. Thomas Methodist Church, in a busy residential area of Exeter, Devon. The group has exclusive use of two interconnecting playrooms during sessions. Toilet facilities are close to the playrooms and there is a separate kitchen. There are enclosed outdoor play areas at the side and rear of the building. The pre-school is open during term-time only from 9.00am to 12.30pm Tuesday and Friday, and from 9.00am until 3.00pm on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. They are registered on the Early Years Register for a maximum of 24 children aged from two until the end of the early years age range. At present, there are 50 children on roll, all of whom are in the early years age range. The pre-school welcomes and supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. The committee employ seven members of staff to work directly with the children; four members of staff have level 2 or above, early years qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The needs of the children are routinely met through positive relationships being established with the children and their parents. Staff have good knowledge of children's individual needs ensuring that their individuality is recognised, valued and respected within a fully inclusive environment. All children make good progress in their learning and development through the provision of a balanced range of experiences and good interaction by interested staff. Children's welfare is promoted well through effective practice which ensures the smooth running of the provision. The committee and staff are a strong team who have good understanding of areas in which they could improve and are developing appropriate self-evaluation systems, although these are not fully embedded, as yet, to ensure the involvement of all users of the provision.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- review and update policies and procedures in line with current legislation to underpin the practices followed by staff, in particular the complaints procedure and safeguarding policy.
- develop further links with other early years providers to ensure continuity in children's care, learning and development
- extend self-evaluation systems to further develop monitoring of the provision and to involve all users of the setting, including parents, committee and staff.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Safeguarding arrangements are effective and collaborative links have been made with key agencies to ensure children's safety. Good procedures have been established to ensure effective recruitment, vetting and induction for all staff and committee members. Staff have good knowledge of child protection issues which are regularly reviewed and procedures are robust to ensure children's well-being. However, the safeguarding policy has not been amended to reflect the change of name to the Local Safeguarding Children Board as the central agency. Risk assessments and daily check lists ensure children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. These include detailed actions regarding potential hazards so that steps can be taken to minimise risk to the children such as, replacing damaged fencing. Staff have been proactive in considering the use of the church hall's toilets as these are shared facilities. To safeguard children, and ensure effective deployment of staff, a hand washing unit has been installed within the pre-school room. This means children wash their hands independently without being escorted to the toilet facilities. Risk assessments have been completed for each type of outing. Staff visit the location before taking the children and each assessment is reviewed before staff embark on the trip.

A supportive committee works alongside the dedicated team of practitioners; all are focused on improving outcomes for the children. The committee evaluate their role within the setting well and the chairperson seeks advice and support to further develop her understanding of the role and the early years teacher from the local Children's Centre is supporting staff in monitoring children's learning and development. The team have good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. For example, the committee recognise the importance of regularly reviewing and updating policies as some have not been amended in line with current practice such as, the complaints procedure. An effective action plan has been established, for instance, developing the outdoor provision. Key staff are currently evaluating the provision however, as yet, this has not fully included all users of the setting, including the committee and staff. Appraisals are used effectively to ensure staff access relevant training to further support children's care, learning and development. Staff show genuine interest as they support and interact with the children and have good knowledge of children's individual requirements for instance, their interests, and value and respect their individuality.

Positive relationships have been established with parents to ensure there is a good exchange of information, for instance, each term a report is shared with parents detailing children's achievements and learning priorities. Key person systems are used effectively to ensure staff have good knowledge of the children including their starting points, special educational needs and care routines. Partnerships with other agencies have been effective in meeting children's individual needs and providing continuity in care such as, Social Services and Portage workers. There are good links with local schools to ensure the smooth transition from pre-school to school, as well as the Children's Centre where regular visits occur. However, limited information is shared with other early years providers to enhance children's care, learning and development.

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

An enabling environment is organised for the children where they are able to make independent choices, moving freely between the two rooms. Practitioners have identified the need to develop children's independence further to enable them to make decisions about their play hence, catalogues picturing the wide range of toys and resources available to the children are being established. All activities are adapted and appropriately resourced to ensure all children can access the experience. Resources are integrated into children's daily activities to reflect the diversity in our society and staff acknowledge they need, through their self-evaluation, to embrace different cultures and religions within their activities.

Children are actively involved in a range of experiences both inside and out. For example, children are able to explore and investigate their environment through use of the Children's Centre environmental area. Activities are continued as children show an interest in how the leaves have changed colour over time. Whilst outside a child weaves their wheelbarrow, negotiating space confidently. A member of staff interacts with the child to enhance the experience, for instance, using fingers to represent the number of leaves to collect, thus the child is using mathematical language within their play. There is a good balance between adult-led and child initiated play and planning evolves throughout the week as staff make observations of the children's engagement. Staff keenly interact with the children and have good knowledge of learning intentions, related to planned activities, to promote children's learning and development. Activities are evaluated weekly and effectively influence future planning. There are good systems in place to record children's progression and to clearly identify next steps in children's learning. Through self-evaluation staff have identified the need to summarise children's achievements to share with parents.

Children's behaviour is very good as staff have developed consistent strategies to support children so that they are clear on expectations and boundaries. For instance, to ensure children are listening a rhyme has been introduced and children attentively listen to instructions. A sand timer is used effectively to ensure children play harmoniously. For example, after supporting a child to learn a new skill whilst using the laptop a member of staff initiates the sand timer as other children are waiting their turn. The child receives a clear explanation and is reminded when their turn is finished. Caring relationships are established with the children and they have an excellent sense of belonging. 'All about me' sheets are completed each term to ensure that children's starting points and capabilities are understood and well-managed.

Children feel safe as they are cared for in a secure and supportive environment. Robust arrangements are in place to ensure the safe collection of children by suitable adults as identified by parents. Access to the setting is monitored well as children, parents and visitors are greeted at the door; visitors are requested to sign in and out to ensure an appropriate record. Children become aware of their own safety as they are given clear explanations and gentle reminders by vigilant staff.

Before children go outside to play they are reminded to wait at the bottom of the slope until all staff are available and that they are not to venture past the well-positioned cones to keep them safe from the cars in the car park. This positive procedure has not been included on the record of risk assessment.

Excellent hygiene routines are followed by the children. Staff are very good role models and give children clear explanations for instance, when a member of staff coughs and sneezes into her hand she explains to a child that she needs to go and wash her hands to prevent the spread of infection. Children are aware of their own personal needs and inform staff when they need to go to the toilet. All children are aware of the importance of washing their hands before they access the cafe style snack-time and do so independently. Children are introduced to healthy lifestyles. They are offered a balance of nutritional snack items such as, a selection of fruit, rice cakes and bread sticks which meet their special dietary requirements. Children are able to make healthy choices. They confidently pour their own drinks at snack time and are able to access the water cooler throughout the session to ensure they remain hydrated. These good practices ensure outcomes for children are good.

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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