



Cherubs at St Thomas'

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY266815
Inspection date	24 November 2005
Inspector	Tracy Maria Clarke

Setting Address	St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School, Commonside East, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 1YG
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Registered person	Cherubs Childcare Ltd
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Cherubs at St Thomas were registered in 2003. It operates from four rooms within St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School, in Mitcham, Surrey. The provision serves the local area and the children who attend St Thomas Of Canterbury school.

Cherubs at St Thomas are registered to provide care for up to 80 children under 8-years, of whom no more than 12 may be aged under 1-year. They also provide out of school care for children up to the age of 11. There are currently 56 children on roll aged from 1-year to under 8-years. The provision support children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Children

attend for a variety of sessions throughout the day.

The group operates from Monday to Friday, 51 weeks a year, offering a full day care nursery, as well as a 'wrap around' service, which includes a breakfast club, an after school service, as well as a school holiday play scheme. The opening hours are 08.00 to 18.00.

There are currently 15 staff available to work with the children, most who work on a part time basis. Of these, 7 staff hold a recognised early years qualifications and 4 unqualified staff are working towards an early years qualification. An additional 3 staff, who hold a level 2 childcare qualification, and undertaking training to achieve a level 3. The setting receives support and training from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are able to undertake quieter activities, such as listening to stories in the book area. They move freely around the rooms to take part in activities which encourage their hand and eye co-ordination, such a construction, threading or using scissors. Children enjoy climbing on, under and through the small and large slides and manoeuvring bikes and scooters around the outside play area. They move to action rhymes and a range of music, showing expression and rhythm as they march, wiggle, stretch and dance. Babies have space to sit, crawl and toddle around the room, gaining control of their body. They climb up the steps of the small indoor slide and are given good support from staff as they learn to sit down at the top of the slide. Staff plan regular indoor activities, such as an obstacle course, to enable children to balance, jump over and crawl under a range of equipment. The garden area is every day, weather permitting, and there is a range of equipment and sufficient space to enable children to acquire physical skills, and run and chase one another. Children who attend after school or during the holidays have access to the large school playground. Twice a week a sports coach extends older children's skills as they play football and basketball, and undertake a range of group games.

Children benefit from the good communication between staff and parents, which ensures their sleeping and eating routines are known and their individual dietary needs are met. Parents provide children's main lunch time meal, which is effectively stored, heated and served to children following good hygiene procedures. Meal time arrangements are social occasions, with all children coming together, and displaying good table manners. The staff are then responsible for providing snacks, breakfast and a light tea. During the day children are given some healthy snacks, such as fruit, but the light tea provided consists of processed convenience foods in the main, which are high in salt and sugar content. So although children have undertaken a project in relation to healthy living, they are not fully encouraged to make healthy choices. Children can choose juice or water during meal times, but do not have free access to water at other times.

Children are cared for in a clean and well maintained environment. Effective

procedures during food preparation help to sustain good levels of hygiene and prevent the spread of infection. However, the current location of the nappy changing unit prevents staff from being able to wash their hands immediately after they have finished, and staff do not consistently provide clean bed linen for older children who are resting. Children are aware of the importance of good personal hygiene, knowing for example, that they are washing their hands to 'make them clean'.

The majority of staff hold a first aid certificate, which ensures that children are provided with appropriate care after they have sustained an injury. Accident and medication systems are effectively managed to ensure children remain safe and healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children use a wide range of safe, good quality and developmentally appropriate toys and resources. These are organised well, so that children can access them independently and have space to play with them safely. Staff monitor and supervise children's choice of toys, to ensure that they are appropriate for their age and stage of development. Children are developing a good awareness of keeping themselves safe. For example, staff explain safe practices to children, such as why they should watch out for others when they are moving to the music. They are also reminded to use the large slide in a safe manner when playing in the garden.

Children play in a safe environment, in which risks have been identified and minimised well by staff. Good safety and security policies, such as effective arrival and departure procedures, and good supervision of children throughout the session, keep children safe whilst they are in the setting. Staff understand and comply with health and safety requirements, and the manager has undergone recent training to ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities to keep children safe.

Children are safeguarded and their well-being promoted as the staff have a secure understanding of child protection issues and are aware of what they need to do if they feel a child may be at risk. However, the procedure does not currently include the action which should be taken if a member of staff is alleged to have abused a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle well when they first arrive, separating easily from their main carer, and rushing in to play with the wide range of activities provided. Resources such as puzzles, games, small world toys and construction resources are provided which are suitable for their age and stage of development. Children are happy in their relationships with staff due to the positive feedback and encouragement which staff give to them throughout the session. For example, during music time the staff get down on their knees to be at the babies level, holding their hands and providing lots

of encouragement and positive facial expressions to encourage them to take part. Children benefit from staff who deploy themselves well, so they can offer support to children and question them effectively, which extends their learning.

Children play happily together, linking up well to take part in imaginative role play and climbing up and down the wooden slide. For example, a group of children play with the dolls house, undertaking play based on their own first hand experience. They enjoy making Christmas decorations and working together to create a large group display of Father Christmas, whilst younger children enjoy cutting up magazines, paper and card to make a collage. They explore the texture of the play dough, moulding and rolling it using a range of tools. Babies have opportunities on a weekly basis to explore some natural resources such as a starfish and wooden rings, and there are planned activities during the week for children to play with sand and water. Older children freely access pencils and crayons to mark make and design, and independently draw pictures of their family members and their pets. Although there are many planned craft activities, the opportunities for younger children to explore a range of natural resources, malleable materials and textures are sometimes limited, because they are often adult directed, and only take place at set times during the week. This means that younger children cannot freely extend their creative skills at other times, and fully represent their experiences, feelings and ideas in a variety of ways.

Children's developing communication skills are encouraged through activities such as 'circle time'. For example, an older group of children talk about family pets, describing the colours and sizes of the dogs and cats they have at home. The member of staff extends the conversation by showing children photos of her own two dogs, and children enjoy discussing what the dogs like to eat and what they like to do. Children enjoy listening to books and have built up a wide repertoire of songs which they sing with great enthusiasm, moving their bodies to the action rhymes and joining in loudly with repeated refrains. Younger children are encouraged to become skilful communicators, as staff have positive relationships with them and encourage them to learn new words and share their thoughts and ideas. Children's independence skills are fully encouraged, as they select resources they wish to play with and initiate games with their friends. A group of children for example, enjoy playing with the big cars. They talk about how far their cars can go and move them around the room, trying to race one another and crashing the cars together.

Older children who attend before and after school can access toys, board games, a snooker table and a computer games system, although the range of resources provided for older children is limited in some areas. On the day of the inspection the children were enjoying a group game of bingo, selecting numbered balls up to 70, and covering the corresponding numbered square on their game cards. They understood the rules of the game well and were being extended in their learning by counting large numbers. Children have access to craft resources every day where they can make their own designs, and there are regular opportunities for children to listen to music and make up their own dances. There are also extra-curricular sessions daily, where children can either take part in a variety of sports, learn French or take part in dancing classes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds are welcomed into the nursery. Children play with resources which positively represent the children who attend as well as individuals from the wider community. This helps children to develop a positive attitude towards others. Children also undertake some activities which encourage them to develop an awareness of cultures and festivals.

Staff gently remind children of the expectations of the setting. For example, children are reminded of the correct way to come down the slide so they don't hurt others. Children respond and adapt well to changes in routine, helping to tidy toys away before they have lunch, and lining up to put their coats on when it is time to play outside. Children are very well behaved, sharing resources with one another and linking up with one another to take part in games and activities. For example, when a child brings a photo in from home, she shows it to other children, and allows them to hold it for a while so they can see the picture clearly. They take turns and are polite in response to the expectations of staff, saying please and thank you when offered food at lunch time.

Children with special needs are welcomed into the playgroup and staff take positive steps to include children in all activities, adapting them as necessary. Additional support is provided, so that children who have difficulty communicating with others are provided with a key member of staff, who encourages them to take an active role in play and engage with other children. Additional advice and support is obtained from external agencies, and the parent is involved in all decision making.

Children benefit from the good partnership between staff and parents, which ensures their needs are met and that parents are kept informed of events, themes and activities. Staff involve parents in their child's learning by asking them to contribute things from home or providing them with suggestions as to how they can continue their children's learning at home. Staff recently sought comments from parents, and as a result are now in the process of introducing parents evenings, and providing additional opportunities for parents to see the written observations staff undertake of children's progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in a well organised play environment. This gives them confidence to select resources independently and to settle well. Staff use policies and procedures effectively to promote the welfare, care and safety of children. The majority of policies and procedures are well written and staff understand and implement them as appropriate, although a few require some updating. Written information is well maintained, and parents are provided with regular opportunities to discuss their child's day and their changing needs and routines. Staff, children and visitors daily arrival and departure times are recorded, which ensures children's safety.

Staff are deployed effectively to ensure that qualified staff are working in all areas, and there is a commitment to ongoing staff training, which ensures that staff are kept updated of changing practices and procedures. Good induction systems are in place, which results in all staff being very familiar with policies, aware of children's needs, and able to carry out their responsibilities fully. The owner of the provision attends on a regular basis, and as a result she is able to evaluate staff's performance through observation and formal appraisals. She also meets with the manager and the staff team every term, to ensure that children are being cared for effectively. Staff meetings are used well to discuss activity planning, and share ideas and suggestions for themes. Appropriate recruitment systems ensure that children are cared for by staff who have been thoroughly vetted. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide a service.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection four recommendations were made. The provider has taken all the necessary action to address the recommendations. Children's arrival and departure times are now recorded daily, and a sick child policy has been introduced, which includes exclusion periods for infectious diseases. Accident and medication records are now well maintained and completed in all circumstances. Finally, hand dryers are now safe and secure.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

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

- review the food provided to children so they are offered healthier choices, and revise the nappy changing arrangements in the baby room, to ensure that

staff have immediate access to hand washing facilities.

- revise the child protection procedure so it includes the action to be taken if a member of staff is alleged to have abused a child
- continue to develop planning in relation to the Birth to Three matters framework, so that children have additional opportunities and resources to make connections through sensory experiences

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