



Thatcham Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY292708
Inspection date	17 January 2006
Inspector	Jenny Scarlett
Setting Address	Moorside Youth and Community Centre, Urquhart Road, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG19 4RE
Telephone number	07831 611145
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Registered person	Thatcham Pre-school
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Thatcham Pre-School opened in 1966 and relocated to new premises in 2004. The pre-school operates from the Moorside Youth and Community Centre in Thatcham. A maximum of 35 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:20 to 11:50 and 13:00 to 15:30 including a lunch club. All children share access to secure, enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 58 children aged from 2 years to under 5 years on roll. Of these

41 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide geographical area. The pre-school supports a small number of children with special needs and who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs nine staff members including auxiliary staff. Of these three staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is one staff member working towards a recognised early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted effectively by staff who demonstrate a sound knowledge of the procedures for promoting health and hygiene. Children have a good awareness of their own needs. They have unrestricted access to the bathroom. This aids their independence skills and helps them to foster their own needs and develop skills, such as washing and drying their own hands. Children actively contribute to the development of the health and care routines, such as tidying up and preparing themselves and the room when changes in the session occur.

Children are protected well through the staff's good understanding of the correct procedures to be followed if accidents occur or children require medication. Staff are trained to support children with specific health needs. As a result, children's individual needs are being met consistently and sensitively. Staff use effective procedures to prevent the possible spread of infection. They clean tables thoroughly before and after children eat and wear gloves when dealing with spills or changing children. Children benefit from all staff holding a first aid qualification. This means that minor incidents, such as bumps and falls, are dealt with appropriately as staff are alert to the individual children's needs.

Children's healthy growth and development is being fostered as staff show a good understanding of their individual dietary requirements. Drinks are available to all children and staff acknowledge when children are thirsty. Children appreciate the varied and well presented, nutritious healthy snacks. These comply with individual children's dietary requirements to ensure children remain healthy. The café style snack time aids the children's social skills. They choose when to have their snack and who they want to sit with. Snack and mealtimes are relaxed and social occasions. Children and adults sit together to enjoy their food and each others' company.

Children develop their fine muscle skills, co-ordination and control, through the safe handling of a variety of equipment, tools and materials, such as pencils, puzzle pieces and scissors. They move confidently around the room demonstrating good spatial awareness, for example sitting on individual chairs at group times. Children take part in a range of activities in all areas of learning, which help to develop both their fine and large physical skills. The outdoor play areas provide good physical opportunities for children and they benefit from the daily fresh air and exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in premises that are safe, clean and well maintained. Children and their parents are made welcome on arrival. The individual welcome helps the children feel secure and encourages them to settle at the start of the session. Children use a good range of safe and developmentally appropriate resources. The hall is spacious and mostly welcoming for the children. However, there is a shortage of display boards with limited opportunities to display children's work. As a result, staff do not always display children's work and projects effectively. The opportunities for children to take part in outdoor activities is good. A fully enclosed surfaced outdoor play area is suitable for children's use all year round. Further opportunities to develop children's physical skills are available in the sports hall as well as the pre-school garden.

Children feel confident and secure in their environment through the good deployment of staff who work directly with them. Through gentle encouragement, children learn how to handle scissors and are reminded to walk indoors. Thorough procedures are in place to ensure the children remain safe when accessing the outdoor environment. Staff take appropriate information and equipment with them in case of an accident. They use walkie talkies and mobile phones in case of an emergency. Children share responsibility for keeping the environment safe. They inform staff when they find play dough or spaghetti trodden in to the carpet. Staff's awareness of children's developing abilities helps to ensure appropriate safety measures are in place to avoid dangerous situations and minimise risks. They conduct regular risk assessments both indoors and out and take similar sensible precautions for off-site activities. However, staff do not consistently record the children's arrival and departure times.

Children are well protected by staff who have a sound understanding of child protection policies and procedures and give good priority to the children's welfare. Staff to child ratios ensure that sufficient staff are on duty to meet the individual needs of the children throughout the session.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are confident in their environment. They arrive happily and are eager to settle into activities, therefore most children demonstrate a positive attitude to learning. Children are developing good social skills. They confidently say goodbye to their parents and carers and embrace seeing their friends on arrival. Children share resources and successfully negotiate turn taking in their play and activities, such as using the scissors and sharing equipment in the home corner. They play well on their own and with others showing confidence to initiate and extend their own activities. Children like to discuss their ideas with each other and are guided well by staff who encourage the children in their play and learning.

Staff are developing the Birth to three matters guidance well to provide a good and varied range of play experiences for children under three. Children learn through

play. The under threes experience a varied range of practical experiences that interest them and stimulate their developmental needs effectively. They have warm relationships with staff and benefit from the one to one care and key worker system receiving much individual attention.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The staff plan and provide a suitable range of activities that promote children's learning towards the early learning goals. As a result the children are progressing well as independent learners. Children talk eagerly with staff who question the children well to consolidate their learning. Staff act as positive role models, they know the children well and have good relationships with them. They are aware of each child's stage of development and undertake assessments of the children. Staff make regular observations of what children can do, then identify and plan their next steps for learning. They work directly with the children and show a sound understanding of their individual development needs. Staff help children focus on activities, such as playing the maths game on the computer, making models with junk and completing developmentally appropriate puzzles. Some children demonstrate good concentration skills as they build a house with the duplo and explore the texture of the spaghetti. Staff achieve a good balance between supervised activities and allowing children freedom to create from their imaginations, for example in painting and role play. Children are able to explore with the paints whilst painting their hands and beards on their faces.

Children have a good range of vocabulary. They use language confidently when talking to each other and with staff. This has a positive effect on their growing social skills and self-assurance. Many of the children demonstrate good handwriting skills as they confidently attempt to write for a purpose. These children indicate how they can hold a pencil correctly. However, staff sometimes label children's creations rather than encouraging children to do this for themselves. There are inconsistent opportunities for children to see word in print and for them to recognise their names.

Children have good opportunities to use their creativity. They use their imagination well in role play and construction activities with access to good resources and props to develop this area. Children join in enthusiastically to music and singing. They build and paint large models, such as space ships and walkie talkies, with boxes and glue. Children experience regular opportunities to develop their early maths skills and evidence shows they are progressing in this area.

Children develop a good awareness of their own needs and a mature respect for the needs of others. They show a sound understanding and willingness to keep themselves safe and healthy through routines such as hand washing and caring for their environment. Children's behaviour is generally good. They know right from wrong and with consistent adult support accept responsibility for their actions. Children are sensitive to the needs of others, readily share toys and resources and co-operate with each other.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the positive relationship staff have with parents. This helps the children to settle well into the pre-school. The children are warmly welcomed as they arrive and confidently say 'goodbye' to their parents and carers.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents and carers receive good information about the setting and its education provision. They share relevant information, play activities and discuss the children's individual needs on a regular basis. Children benefit from the open door policy staff have with their parents. Parents receive some opportunities to contribute to the assessments made on their child and to be involved in their child's learning. As a result, parents and carers have an understanding of their child's progress.

Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge of the individual needs of the children in their care. Children with special needs and English as an additional language are fully integrated into the setting. Staff work together with parents, carers and other professionals to organise and plan appropriate activities. This ensures the children take part in activities at their own pace. Children develop a positive attitude to others. They enjoy some outings within the community and develop a secure knowledge of the wider world through well planned topics and activities. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Children benefit from a consistent approach to the management of their behaviour. Staff provide good models for the children by being calm and polite. Praise is given freely to children, promoting their self-esteem. As a result, most children behave well. Children respond to requests from staff at tidy-up time. They become aware of the routines and procedures and know what to expect in response to the changes in the pre-school session.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The pre-school team has developed a range of procedures, which enable staff and parents to know how the setting operates on a daily basis. An operational plan covers all areas of practice and includes suitable policies and procedures. The information and welcome pack for new parents includes additional relevant information. The manager plans the relevant induction training for new staff, although these are carried out informally. Rotas are clearly displayed to make sure everyone is aware of their roles and responsibilities. The staffing and key worker system is effective. Staff work individually with some children with special needs. Additional staff are employed to work in the lunch club. The priority given to staff training is good. New staff receive occasional support meetings to discuss their progress. Informal systems have been developed to monitor staff performance and development of the pre-school on a regular basis. This ensures the setting fulfils its ethos to provide a good quality standard of care and education.

As a result, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is good. Staff work well as a team. They are committed to updating their skills and knowledge through regular training and development. This is used to organise a provision that meets the individual needs of the children in the pre-school. All staff work hard to monitor and improve the setting whilst working within the constraints of shared accommodation. The staff and management committee work well together, as a result, staff receive good support. They evaluate their practice through regular meetings, attending training and promoting their individual development. This results in a consistent staff team who work effectively to meet the individual development and achievements of all the children.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable. This is the setting's first inspection since re-registration.

Complaints since the last inspection

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.

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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):

- ensure registers are accurately recorded
- organise displays of children's work more effectively.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

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

- further develop opportunities for children to recognise their own names and see different forms of writing in print.

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