



St Thomas Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 251662
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Inspector Susan Smith

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Registered person St Thomas Playgroup
Type of inspection Integrated
Type of care Sessional 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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Thomas' Playgroup has been registered for over 25 years and is managed by a voluntary management committee made up of parents of children at the playgroup. It operates from the St Thomas' church Hall in Ipswich.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:15 until 11:45 Monday to Friday. All children share access to a secure enclosed outside play

area.

There are currently 33 children from 2 to under 5 on roll. This includes 25 who receive nursery education funding. Children attend from the local community. The setting supports children with special educational needs and with English as a second language.

The group employs 6 staff. All of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of personal hygiene through regular routines and activities. For example, children are encouraged to wash their hands before snack time and after going to the toilet.

Children's well-being is promoted because staff are informed about children's health care matters and all the required documentation and consents are in place to support this. Most staff have attended first aid and food hygiene training to ensure they are aware of the correct procedures to follow to maintain children's health and prevent the spread of infection. However, some parents have not signed the medicine permission slip and the record of medicine given.

Children's dietary needs are met through a balanced range of snacks that take account of their individual dietary needs and preferences. All children enjoy sufficient quantities of food and drink to ensure that their nutritional needs are met. Fresh fruit, cheese and biscuits and squash or milk are provided at snack time and discussions are developing children's understanding of foods that are good for them and promote good health.

Children enjoy a range of physical activities both indoors and outside that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Children show pleasure while climbing on the climbing frame and making the parachute billow up which develops their balance and coordination. They use wheeled toys expertly, negotiating the space and confidently stopping when necessary. Children demonstrate increasing control while using equipment such as a variety of mark making tools and construction sets to help them develop their hand to eye coordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe environment where risks are minimised and they can move around safely and independently under staff supervision. For example, staff carefully monitor children's arrival and departure and ensure a visitors log is kept and

they supervise children on the climbing frame.

Children use a good range of safe and appropriate resources, which are checked by staff when setting up to ensure they are in good condition. Staff explain safe practices, such as why children should not run up the slide so they do not fall and hurt themselves. This helps children to take responsibility for keeping themselves and others safe.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted because staff have a sound understanding of child protection. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow if suspicions of abuse arose and their child protection policy is shared with parents. However, it does not contain clear procedures to follow if an allegation is made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled in the setting and they benefit from the positive interaction from the staff, which helps to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Sound settling in procedures, such as home visits by the staff, help children and parents become familiar with the staff and the ethos of the playgroup. At times of transition, such as at the beginning of the session, staff greet and say 'hello' to all children and their parents. This helps to develop secure and trusting three way relationships.

Children are encouraged to be occupied in meaningful play through the familiar but flexible routine of free play opportunities and focussed activities. Children concentrate well as staff make effective use of praise and encouragement to help them to persevere with challenges, for example, completing puzzles and matching the colours of the 'linking camels'.

Children are interested in the suitable range of activities and equipment. These are generally used well to support children's all round development. Staff reflect many aspects of 'Birth to three matters' framework in their practice, for example, they operate a key worker system to provide a familiar and trusting adult. The group do not currently use 'Birth to three matters' framework in their planning as there are only a few children aged under three on roll.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals because all staff have a satisfactory knowledge of the Foundation stage. Staff are beginning to assess children's learning against the stepping stones and the early learning goals. These observations and assessments of children are recorded in individual records of progress. However, they are not used effectively to inform planning which means that activities do not always offer sufficient challenges for older or more able children to move them on to the next step. Staff are very caring and value each child's contribution. They show a genuine interest in what the children do, use questioning effectively and respond

appropriately to children's requests.

Most children are confident communicators, they speak confidently and clearly with adults and each other and enjoy having imaginary conversations on the play telephones. Children enjoy listening to and responding to stories. During circle time routines they have opportunities to identify initial letter sounds and names of letters. However, they show little interest in looking at books for pleasure. Children have opportunities to develop early writing skills, for example, on the daily graphic table.

Children are given opportunities to explore colour when painting. However, art and craft activities are mostly adult-initiated which impinges on children's creativity. They have good opportunities to use their imagination showing enthusiasm for role-play which is well supported by a good range of resources.

Children are beginning to recognise numerals and use mathematical language in context. Staff introduce basic mathematical learning such as size and shape throughout practical activities such as construction and modelling. Some children can count to up to eight. However, opportunities are missed to develop children's problem solving skills during daily routine activities.

Children display good levels of confidence and are eager to participate in new activities. There are some opportunities for children to develop independence skills, for example, selecting free play activities and pouring drinks at snack times.

Children have a good sense of time, which is developed by staff as they learn about the daily routine and the use of visual prompts. They gain an understanding of the natural world through planned activities, such as visits to the local allotments and exploring snow. Children enjoy using forms of everyday technology such as telephones, keyboard, toy microwave and tills in their role play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued as individuals and are able to make positive choices and decisions during their time at the setting. They are developing a positive attitude to each other and gain an understanding of the wider world through displays, planned activities and resources available that reflect diversity.

Children's behaviour is generally good. Staff are good role models and their calm and consistent manner helps children understand the expected rules of behaviour. Children cooperate together as they share popular resources such as the role play equipment, puppets and ride on toys. Children are very confident in their relationships with staff, for example, initiating discussion and putting on puppet shows for the staff. They play happily together with their peers and with adults, interacting, negotiating and sharing while using the available resources.

The setting works closely with parents and other professionals to ensure children's specific needs are met. Policies are in place to care for children with special needs, and staff have a clear knowledge and understanding of special needs issues.

The Partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is good.

Parents are very positive about the setting. They are provided with adequate information about the Foundation Stage and are kept informed about the setting through daily chats, information on the notice board in the lobby and regular newsletters. Parents views are sought through questionnaires, were they make complimentary comments, such as "we find the newsletter very useful, it enables us to know what children are doing ".

Parents are encouraged to share in their children's learning and contribute to their children's records. The group has a complaints policy in place, however, they have yet to develop a complaints log so it can be accessed by parents.

The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Most policies and procedures are in place and work in practice to keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare. However, robust appointment, recruitment and induction systems are not in place for new staff to ensure they are safe to work with children. The staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and work well together to create a caring environment for children. The room is organised to allow children to move freely and safely and the routine of the session helps children to settle well. Staff spend the majority of their time interacting with the children to support children's care, learning and play.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory.

The committee and the established staff team work well together to develop the provision of nursery education and support from the local authority support team help to evaluate the provision for nursery education. Effective systems are in place to monitor staff training needs. They are committed to providing a high quality learning environment, for example, they have established an outdoor grassed area for children to play on and are working together to further improve the outside provision. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group agreed to provide a range of age appropriate resources that reflect positive images of peoples differences. Children are provided with regular access to a range of resources that reflect positive images of peoples differences, such as dressing up clothes, books and posters therefore improving opportunities to learn about diversity.

At the previous nursery education inspection the group agreed to improve the staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how to

provide an effective learning environment. They also agreed to develop the assessment system and develop strategies to deploy staff effectively.

All staff have attended training to improve their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and the staff now provide an environment which promotes children's learning effectively. Children's progress through the stepping stones is monitored in their assessment records mainly through evaluating adult focus activities and all records are shared with parents. Staff are now satisfactorily deployed and spend the majority of their time interacting with the children so enhancing their learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004.

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 robust appointment, recruitment and induction systems are in place to ensure new staff working with children are safe to do so
- review child protection policy to include what action would be taken if an allegation is made against a member of staff.

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):

- develop planning so that activities build on what children already know and to offer all children sufficient challenge

- further develop observation, assessment and evaluation procedures to identify children's next steps of learning
- provide opportunities within the everyday routine for children to further develop their problem solving skills.

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