

Thomas's Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date

09/12/2010

Inspector

Linda Close

Setting address

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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*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

Thomas's Kindergarten, which is located in Battersea, is an independent nursery school which is part of Thomas's London Day Schools which is a group of family-run co-educational independent settings. The kindergarten is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. The kindergarten originally opened in 1992 and was de-registered in error then registered again in 2010 under the same ownership. The kindergarten is open from 8.45am to 11.45am during term time only. Children may join from the age of two years six months and when they are three years old they may attend optional afternoon sessions which focus on activities which include sports, ballet, drama and yoga.

There are currently 48 children on roll who range in age from two years six months to under five years. The kindergarten welcomes children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and a small number of children on roll are learning English as an additional language or hear other languages spoken at home.

The kindergarten is based in the crypt of St.Mary's Church. Children use the churchyard for outdoor play under close supervision as it is accessible to members of the public. There are currently seven members of staff all of whom are qualified to a minimum of level 3 and some to degree level. One member of staff has qualified teacher status (QTS) and one has achieved Early Years Professional Status (EYPS). Additional specialist teachers visit to lead music sessions as well as ballet and yoga activity groups. The local authority is Wandsworth.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children are making excellent progress in their learning in this thriving kindergarten. Staff are qualified to a high level and they successfully apply their knowledge and understanding of how children learn. The staff team focuses sharply on the individual learning needs of each child and they ensure that the needs of every child are met. Children show in their happy smiling faces, and in their eagerness to enter the setting at the beginning of the day, that they feel safe and they enjoy their learning experiences. The staff team has established a strong partnership with parents and they work closely together for the good of the children. Management has forged very effective links with the local authority development workers who visit to input their valuable advice and good ideas and most suggestions for improvement have already been acted upon. The head teacher and her staff constantly evaluate their work with children and they strive to maintain high standards and to achieve ongoing improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- enhance the information in children's profile documents by providing an overview to show where they are up to in relation to the Early Learning Goals for all six areas of learning

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The head teacher and her staff are dedicated to safeguarding the children in their care. Every member of staff has attended update training recently to ensure that their knowledge and awareness of child protection issues remains current. Since their training they have taken a sensible step in agreeing to store all mobile phones in a locked box in the setting during the kindergarten day to enhance children's safety. Staff suitability is rigorously checked at the time of their employment and the head teacher keeps all of the required checking details on site and ready for inspection. Policy and procedure documents are suitable, understood by the staff and shared with parents so that they are fully aware of the kindergarten's responsibilities in relation to all aspects of safeguarding. Risk assessments are made of the indoor and outdoor area as well as for outings. Daily checks are conducted to ensure children's safety. Staff station themselves at strategic points when children are using the outdoor area as they are well aware that a path through the churchyard is used by the public.

Evaluation of all aspects of the kindergarten's provision is highly effective and continuous. Staff confer at the end of every morning session and they strive to find ways to inject new ideas into their work. The head teacher and her staff are very active in their approach to professional development and they make very good use of their learning to enhance children's learning experiences. The whole staff team is involved in maintaining high standards and in finding ways to develop the setting further.

Staff arrive well before the children every day to prepare the learning environment. By the time the children arrive there are interesting materials and activities set out all around the kindergarten and the children cannot wait to explore. Staff decide what to set out in response to their observations of what children enjoy, say and do the previous day and in this way they make the playrooms appealing and stimulating. Children make choices and decisions daily and this develops their self confidence and their independence. The kindergarten has very good quality resources and a wide selection of books arranged in various places for children to relax and share books together. The yard around the church is used daily for energetic play in the fresh air. However, a public footpath runs across the churchyard and the location of ancient grave stones has hitherto impeded any alteration of this space.

Every individual child's needs are identified and well met. The kindergarten staff make detailed observations of each child's progress and this enables them to quickly identify any learning difficulties that children may be experiencing. They share concerns with parents and seek advice from the school special needs coordinator (SENCO) and from local authority advisory staff. They welcome visits from speech therapists and occupational therapists if there is a need and they identify targets which are reviewed frequently. Adults work together very well to provide the support that each child needs. The kindergarten also welcomes several children who hear other languages spoken at home and their sensitive support enables the children to make rapid progress in speaking English.

The head teacher and her staff have established an excellent partnership with parents and carers. The parent/teacher association organises social events for new and existing parents to draw them into the kindergarten community and to make them feel welcome. Parents are actively involved in fund raising initiatives and they support nativity plays and outings. They are warmly welcomed into the setting at the beginning and at the end of the day to share news with staff. They can see a selection of notices and policy documents on display and they meet staff formally and informally to discuss children's progress, to celebrate their achievements and to find ways to support them at home. Although the information is extensive, and children's progress is well known to all, there is no easy to read overview of children's achievements.

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

Children attending the kindergarten have excellent opportunities to develop skills that form a sound basis for their future learning. They relate very well to the staff and they are forming friendships and learning to get along happily with other children. Staff instill a love of learning in the children who are very enthusiastic and fully involved in their activities. The children have free access to writing materials and they draw and make marks with confidence. Some of the children can already write their names correctly using well formed letters and they confidently label their own art work. Clear speech is modelled by the staff who introduce and explain new words as children play. This is particularly evident when children are experimenting with tubes and funnels at the water tables to find ways of making water flow into and out of jugs and a range of containers. Children learn about numbers and counting in games and when they are using modern computers. They select programmes with confidence, drive the computers competently and show growing expertise in their use of the computer mouse. They also make very good use of remote controlled equipment and the 'bee-bot' and 'excavator-bot' are a great source of excitement.

Children can help themselves to fresh fruit snacks and fresh drinking water at any time. Staff ensure that all children take a drink from time to time to maintain their hydration levels. Older children can bring a packed lunch from home if they are

staying for afternoon activities but no meals are provided by the kindergarten. Staff enthusiastically promote healthy eating through discussion and by selecting healthy options for cooking activities and they ask parents to provide healthy choices. Children learn about and understand the importance of washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet facilities.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. They are busy and contented throughout the sessions and any minor disagreements are used by staff to highlight fairness and consideration for others. Children respond well when staff politely point out the hazards of risky play and children accept gentle reminders with a smile. Good relationships are clearly evident and the children show in their relaxed body language and eagerness to talk to the staff that they feel safe and secure in the kindergarten. They heed the musical signal for 'tidy-up time' and happily help staff to put their toys and books away. They are eager to take part in 'physi-gym' and join in with energy and enthusiasm. Staff and children dance and move to foot-tapping beat music for a period of time every day and it is enjoyed by all. A specialist music teacher visits weekly to lead singing and music making activities. Afternoon clubs include sporting activities and yoga as well as ballet classes which adds another stimulating dimension to kindergarten life for the older members of the group. Weekly visits to the main school help to prepare children for the next step in their education.

The activities that are planned for the children include learning about life in other countries and in other communities. Photograph albums in the reading areas and a digital photo frame on a low level bookcase show an ever changing selection of pictures providing visual evidence of how the children delight in dressing up in Nepalese clothing, carrying a basket using a headband and eating Nepalese food. The kindergarten raises money for food for children in the United Kingdom and abroad by supporting an initiative called 'Mary's Meals'. Parents visit to share their knowledge of other languages and customs including Dutch special events at Christmas time and celebrations and activities linked to Diwali and Chinese New Year. Children delight in taking the kindergarten teddy bear on holiday with them and the resulting photograph albums created by parents and children show that the teddy's travels are extensive and exciting having taken him to ski in the snow and sunbathe on warm beaches.

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?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:

Met