

St Thomas Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	254499
Inspection date	04/05/2011
Inspector	Elaine Poulton

Setting address	St Thomas Church, St. Thomas Close, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands, WS9 8SL
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Telephone number	01922 745106
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Email

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

St Thomas Playgroup has been registered since 1996 and is run by a committee. It operates from a self-contained prefabricated building in the grounds of St Thomas Church, Aldridge, West Midlands. The group has access to a secure outdoor play area.

The provision is registered to care for 20 children in the early years age group at any one time. There are currently 43 children on roll, of whom eight are in receipt of funding. The provision is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and on both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. Children attend a variety of sessions each week. The playgroup opens each week day from 9.30am to 12.30pm during school term time only. The setting currently supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and has arrangements in place to support children who speak English as an additional language.

Five part-time staff are employed to work directly with the children. Three hold an appropriate childcare qualification to level 3. Parents are also encouraged to be actively involved in the sessions. The setting is supported by the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Most children make good progress in their learning and development as staff have a secure understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements to promote an inclusive environment. Children's care, good health and welfare needs are met through a good range of policies, procedures and permissions that are shared with parents. Good relationships exist with parents and are fostered effectively with others who are involved in delivering the foundation stage. Systems to evaluate the provision are in their infancy so do not identify all areas for future development. However, all staff are committed to benefit children's learning development and care through continual improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- support practitioners to plan and resource a challenging environment where children's play can be supported and extended
- develop further the use of self-evaluation to identify areas for improvement in all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- develop observational assessment in order to consistently make links to the 'Development matters' prompts to plan the next steps in a child developmental progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's safety and welfare are well maintained in the setting as there are good recruitment, vetting and induction procedures in place. Staff understand their role and responsibility to safeguard children's welfare and capably describe procedures for working with relevant agencies to protect children from harm or neglect. Staff have appropriate clearances to ensure that are suitable to be working with children and records of continuing suitability are maintained. Most staff are experienced and hold early years qualifications to level 3. Policies, procedures and permissions are regularly reviewed to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the provision. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and daily checks are in place to minimise potential hazards. This ensures children remain safe and secure in the setting.

All children are included in this pre-school group. The organisation of space indoors and outdoors means there is ample opportunity for children to self-select toys and games, choose activities and be active in their learning environment. However, sometimes planned activities are less well organised and resourced to effectively support all six areas of children's learning and development.

Relationships with parents are good and information is shared with children's key person. A profile is completed for all new starters and includes helpful details, such as, children's daily routines, likes and dislikes and individual interests. This helps staff to care for children according to their individual needs and parents' wishes. Parents' views are valued and sought in the form of questionnaires and their comments and requests are acted upon accordingly. Parents comment that 'my child is very happy here'. Good relationships are fostered with other professionals. For example, children centre staff are welcomed into the group to work with children on particular topics, such as 'letters and sounds', and the pre-school staff team are invited to training events at the local school. Individual learning profiles are passed to parents to share with receiving nursery schools. This in turn helps children make a smooth transition to education while promoting continuity of care and learning.

The self-evaluation system is relatively new and not all staff are involved in the process or contribute their suggestions or ideas. This means the evaluation system is not yet fully effective to identify all areas for improvement. The management team schedules staff and committee meetings to discuss practice issues. There are good opportunities for staff development and training. For example, staff are encouraged to attend safeguarding awareness sessions as a team. After withdrawal of funding, the outdoor area is now being developed steadily and this ensures children enjoy and benefit from free-flow access to fresh air and physical activity each day.

Two of the four recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed effectively. This means that the required information has been added to both the safeguarding and complaints procedures. Steady progress has been made with

both planning and the development of children's learning profiles. This shows the group's ongoing commitment to continual improvement.

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

Most children are making good progress in their learning and development as they have ample opportunities to play and enjoy the learning environment. Staff have a secure understanding of the early years framework and of children's individual interests. However, planning is not always fully effective to support and extend children's learning through a range of organised and challenging activities. Staff observe and assess children during their play and make a record of their progress and achievements in individual development profiles. However, these records do not always link consistently to the 'Development matters' prompts to promote the next steps in a child's developmental progress.

New starters are helped to settle in by staff, and parents are welcome to stay for as long as they wish. This helps their children to feel safe and secure. Older children are actively involved in their play and understand that they can freely access all toys and games in the playrooms indoors or take part in a good range of activities outdoors.

All children are included and have the opportunity to join in with planned activities, such as, mini beast hunts, 'magic' water painting, gluing and sticking. Older children begin to initiate their own play and include themselves in peer group activities, and share and take turns with popular pieces of equipment, such as bikes and the outdoor playhouse. Routines, such as snack time, are not always used effectively to support children's personal independence skills, although children do have opportunities on some occasions to take responsibility for a special task, such as being the fruit or drinking beaker 'monitor'.

Children's language skills are developing well as staff encourage them to sing nursery rhymes, engage them in conversation during circle time and take time to listen and respond to their requests during play and craft activities. Children use a variety of tools and resources, such as, play dough, paintbrushes and chalks during craft activities. This helps develop their fine movements and manipulative skills. They begin to explore computers and information technology and practice manoeuvring the mouse attachment. This helps them to develop their skills for the future.

Younger children enjoy exploring small world resources, such as mini beasts and farm animals, and happily collect armfuls of logs or buckets of sand and transport them from one place to another. During sand and water play they are introduced to different concepts, such as, comparing the size of different containers, recognising shapes and discovering more about creatures that live under water and swim in the sea. They are eager to take part in making tracks in the sand with wheeled resources and happily play together in a small group.

Children behave well and are supported to consider other children's feelings. Older

children respond well to gentle reminders, such as not to shut their fingers in the playhouse door and to handle books carefully. Children learn more about other people's similarities and differences through celebrating cultural festivals and events. This helps children to develop awareness of their own community and the wider world around them.

Good methods are used to encourage children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The younger children are supported to follow good hygiene routines during toileting training and nappy changing and older ones are helped with hand washing after visiting the bathroom and before snack time. Staff promote healthy eating by providing options such as fruit at snack time and ensure that fresh drinking water is available during the session.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	3
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	3
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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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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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Annex B: the Childcare Register

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