

St Thomas's Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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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

St Thomas's Playgroup registered in 1994. It operates from a church hall in Finsbury Park in the London Borough of Islington. Access to the premises is at ground level via a footpath from the adjacent roadway. Children have the use of a large play room and an extra small room for group activities. They share access to a secure outdoor play area. The playgroup is open from 9.15am until 1.15pm every weekday during term time. The setting is in receipt of funding for free early years education.

The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 24 children in the early years age group may attend the setting at any one time, of these, none may be under two years. Currently there are 24 children on roll. The playgroup supports children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. There are five staff employed to work with children at the setting. All staff hold relevant early years qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The playgroup offers a safe and welcoming provision for children for children of all ages and abilities. There is a particular emphasis on an inclusive approach which succeeds in closing identified gaps in children's differing achievements. Children's welfare is promoted effectively through the implementation of appropriate health and safety procedures. There is an excellent working partnership with parents and this contributes to children making very good progress in their learning and skill development. The manager is proactive in driving improvement which benefits all children who attend the setting. As a result the playgroup is now extremely well resourced in terms of playspace, staffing and equipment.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- make the most of opportunities to challenge and extend children further, in their learning, while involved in free choice play activities.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The playgroup's documentation is well organised and maintained, providing a good framework for staff's practice. There are effective procedures in place to promote the safeguarding of children in the setting. Regular risk assessments and safety

checks are carried out to ensure that potential risks on the premises continue to be minimised effectively. Staff risk assess all outings that children take part in and always supervise children closely. All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of child protection procedures and know what to do if they have any concerns regarding child protection. The manager has recently introduced a staff handbook so that staff are well informed about policies and procedures that relate to the safeguarding of children.

The play room is set out every day in an inviting manner for children, encouraging them to become involved in a variety of activities as soon as they arrive. The outdoor area has recently been developed as an attractive play area and now contains some particularly interesting and challenging equipment. Children especially enjoy the large sand and mud pits, quiet seating areas and dens, as well as the opportunities to ride and climb. Staff use their time effectively to interact with children and offer support. Consequently children often benefit from individual attention. Staff act as excellent role models in promoting a sense of community. They help children to develop close relationships with each other, taking care to avoid confrontational situations whenever possible.

Staff liaise closely with parents and carers. The extra room in the hall provides an excellent information point for parents where they can find out about the playgroup's provision for children as well as learn about the different aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage. New parents receive a comprehensive registration pack with clear information about policies and required consents. All parents are actively encouraged to contribute to children's profile books and also to staff's individual planning for their children. They receive detailed summary reports of their children's progress within each learning area. In this way parents are fully involved in their children's learning throughout their time at playgroup. They express immense satisfaction with the provision for their children, especially the opportunities to be so involved in the setting.

Staff work in partnership with other professionals to support children who have special educational needs. They are actively pursuing links with a local children's centre. The manager continually enthuses and motivates her staff by encouraging them to take on responsibilities and to contribute to the ongoing self-evaluation of the setting. Their ability to use these opportunities to the best effect is evident in the significant improvements made since the previous inspection. For example, staff have been given more time to work with the children through the appointment of a kitchen assistant and also more time to meet and plan together. Tracking systems have been introduced, leading to a more flexible provision which takes account of the way in which different groups of children learn. Future plans for the playgroup are set out in a development plan and monitored to check progress and long-term impact on children.

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

Children enjoy the wide variety of play opportunities on offer. They are well settled and explore happily, sometimes individually and at other times with friends. Staff support children in following up their own interests, talking with them and suggesting ideas to enhance and extend their play. Consequently children gain

much self-confidence and learn to persevere at self-chosen tasks. For example, they experiment with different ways of constructing models or developing different roles in imaginary play. Children especially enjoy 'spontaneous' activities, such as the introduction of materials for mixing a play dough or a tray of shaving foam to investigate. Children have much fun as they play together and interact with staff. They are very aware of each others needs and behave responsibly at all times. They are keen to participate, and learn, and delight in the opportunities to choose from alternative play experiences indoors and outdoors.

Staff use an effective system of observational assessment to move children on in their learning. Individual children's starting points are assessed and regular observations on their learning are then used to guide future planning. This works extremely well in providing opportunities for children to extend their learning and to gain new skills. They demonstrate an increasing awareness of letters, sounds and numbers. They develop good co-ordination and learn to negotiate space as they travel. Children learn to cooperate when working with others in a group. They explore diversity as they find out about different cultures and festivals, for example, at Chinese New Year. Staff organise group activities to focus and reinforce children's learning. At times, they take opportunities to extend children's learning through their interaction and conversation, for example, encouraging children to think as they share books. However, staff do not always make the most of opportunities to interact and extend children's learning in free choice play. Children feel safe and secure in the setting and move around confidently making their choices. They learn to behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. They talk about keeping safe in different situations and readily cooperate in tasks around the setting that keep children safe, for example, tidying away toys and clearing away water. Children are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. They enjoy exercise in the fresh air and learn about natural processes as they grow their own vegetables, fruits and herbs. They are offered an interesting and healthy variety of snacks, including fresh salad vegetables and fruits. Staff encourage children to become independent at snack times and during activities, for example, adding ingredients to the play dough mix. Children access drinking water during the session, selecting cups and water for themselves. They have good opportunities to explore nature on a local nature reserve and to be creative in arts and crafts activities.

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	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
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	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	1
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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