

St Thomas More Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127631
Inspection date	13 July 2007
Inspector	Claire, Alexandra Parnell
Setting Address	The Priest's House, The Hermitage, More Park, West Malling, Kent, ME19 6HN
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Registered person	St. Thomas More Church
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Thomas More Nursery opened in 1990.

The group operates from three rooms in the Priest's House next door to St Thomas More Roman Catholic Church in West Malling. The nursery serves the local parish and community.

There are currently 48 children on roll aged between two years and five years. This includes 38 funded three and four year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language are supported within the group.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 11:30 on a Monday, 08:45 to 11:45, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and from 12:30 to 1500 on a Wednesday and Friday and from 13:00 to 15:30 on a Thursday.

One full time and seven part time members of staff work with the children. Four members of staff are qualified.

The setting receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are developing a good understanding of hygiene through every day routine personal skills. Children have access to heated running water, anti-bacterial soap and separately named towels to promote good hygiene practices. Children are encouraged to use an anti-bacterial foam to clean their hands before their snack time. These practices also actively prevents cross infection.

Children's ongoing health needs are promoted well. Good levels of consent are gained from parents to ensure the correct dosages of medication is administered to children at the correct time. This information is also effectively fed back to parents on collecting their children. Accidents are recorded immediately after the event. This information is also effectively shared with parents to ensure continuity of care. More than enough staff hold relevant paediatric first aid certificates to ensure accidents are dealt with quickly and professionally.

Children choose from a good range of healthy drinks and snacks during their set snack time at pre-school. Snacks consist of varieties of fruit as well as occasional cereals, ready brek and cultural foods. Children can independently access a jug of fresh water and cups to ensure their thirst can be quenched at any time. Staff hold relevant information about children's dietary needs and use this information well to ensure children's dietary requirements are always met.

Children take part in regular physical activities and exercise throughout the session, both indoors and outdoors, to fully promote their physical well being. They are developing a good sense of what is healthy for them, including movements and food and drink. They have access to and use a good range of resources well to promote gross motor skills, such as climbing frames, slides, balls, trolleys and bikes. Windows are always open within the setting and children have daily opportunities to use open spaces outside to ensure they have access to fresh air.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Good systems are in place to ensure children's security and safety is promoted well. The children are not able to leave the premises unattended due to rigorous security measures such as locked main doors and a bell system to ensure no-body enters the building uninvited. The outside area is made secure with bolted gates and the grassed areas, used on occasions, are well supervised due to the effective deployment of staff. A thorough risk assessment is carried out to ensure the environment is carefully checked for potential hazards. Immediate action is taken to make appropriate changes if identified.

Equipment and resources are well maintained to promote children's safety and independence. Children access most activities themselves from low level containers, shelves and cupboards. Staff spend valuable time cleaning and maintaining equipment to ensure they are clean and safe to use.

Good procedures are in place to ensure children are taken home with authorised people. Clear information is gathered from parents to give consent for other people to take children home. Children are developing a good sense of keeping themselves and others safe. They listen to staff's instructions and remind others of what can happen if they carry out certain tasks, such as building very high towers from bricks. Effective risk assessments are carried out for children's trips, such as to Maidstone to visit the theatre. Consent is sought, ratios are revised, supervision and staff deployment is carefully planned to ensure children enjoy their trip but essentially are kept safe. Children are effectively evacuated from the building in an emergency due to the robust procedures that are followed by all staff and visitors.

Children's welfare is promoted well and they are effectively safeguarded from harm. This is due to knowledgeable staff who clearly understand their responsibility to report any concerns. Staff are very aware of comprehensive procedures to follow such as what to record, how to react to children and who to contact for support. Good procedures are also in place to record any visitors to the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children are occupied and actively engaged in a good range of pre-selected and self selected activities covering all areas of learning and development. Staff interact well, genuinely interested in children's play. Children's experiences at home are positively linked to children's learning within the setting due to the staff's effective use of information from home. Children who are new and are settling receive sensitive reassurance and comfort from all staff who understand the difficulties for some children. All activities are carefully linked to both Foundation stage and the Birth to three matters framework to ensure all children's developmental stages are provided for and promoted well.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress within the Foundation Stage due to the staff's knowledgeable use of the curriculum and effective use of teaching methods, planning and recording of achievements. Staff make excellent use of short and long term planning, which carefully link to focus activities, intentions of learning and individual children's target for development. Children's achievements are recorded well through spontaneous and focus observations. These relate well to the areas, aspects and stepping stones of development showing an accurate record of their progress within the curriculum. Staff interact very positively with the children, allowing them to lead the play. Children are encouraged to think for themselves due to the staff's subtle questions and extended learning initiatives. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are thoroughly supported through well thought out systems and good levels of liaison with parents and other professional bodies. All activities and children's progress are carefully analysed and evaluated to ensure children's future development is highly promoted.

Children thoroughly enjoy stories and link current experiences of starting school with stories told by the staff. They confidently listen for their names and answer verbally and with purposeful gestures to show they are here. Children use well thought out resources to identify their names with written labels such as their coat pegs and towels. They are developing skills to make purposeful marks such as writing their name to label their pictures.

Children learn about comparisons of size and shape, associating them with real objects. They recognise familiar and repetitive patterns within their environment and associate these well with real objects too, such as parallel lines with train tracks. Children learn some counting and number association through counting songs and routine situations such as register time. However, they have limited opportunities to learn about numerals and amounts through practical situations within the indoor and outdoor play environments.

Children learn about the outdoor environment, including how things grow, changes in the environment and associate home grown food with healthy eating. They use technology effectively to make changes to information. They are developing a good sense of time and place, recalling past events and what happened there, such as visiting their new schools. They particularly benefit from the experimentation and exploration activities that develop their intrigue and questioning abilities, such as what will make a coin shiny again, vinegar, water or polish.

Children use rhythm well, listening to the rhythm of their name to count the beats. They self represent in art work, effectively painting their choice of picture through discussion, recalling what they have done the day before. They confidently sing familiar songs and listen intently to new songs and tunes.

Children are developing good dexterity skills. They use good hand eye coordination to demonstrate their pencil control, in both palmer and pincer grip, as well as moving the mouse effortlessly on the computer and hanging their clothes on hangers in the role play area.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individuality is recognised and reflected positively through the children's care. Staff use written and verbal information from parents about children's individual needs to offer them the appropriate care. Children learn about diversity within their society due to celebrations of cultural festivals and play with resources that reflect positive images of race, gender, ability and religion.

Children with learning difficulties and /or disabilities are supported well due to close relationships with parents, schools, support systems and other professionals.

Children's behaviour is very good. They understand right from wrong due to the clear explanations and directives to ensure they learn about appropriate behaviour and the impact improper behaviour has on others. Significant changes in behaviour are carefully monitored and careful assessments are made to determine the reasons for such changes. Children are very independent in their play, making selections for themselves from accessible resources. They are also very aware of other children's needs and are quick to offer support and help to others that needs it, such as helping to pour other children's drinks at snack time. Children invite each other into their play, learning to accept other children's points of views and opinions. They have good levels of concentration for their age. They listen intently to assemblies within the adjoining school and to stories read by members of staff and other children. Therefore children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is good. Parents have access to a fully comprehensive set of policies and procedures to support and positively reflect the care of their children within the setting. This also includes good information about the Foundation Stage and how children

learn through play situations. Parents have daily access to effective complaints procedures informing them who to contact if they have concerns about the care of their children. Parents are fully informed about each session and have a clear understanding about the themes and topics that the children are learning about. They receive consistent ideas and suggestions, through an informative newsletter, regarding activities that can be encouraged at home to support and enhance children's learning. Parents have good opportunities to participate in children's sessions, watching how children learn and initiating activities that are of an interest to them.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by a team of well qualified and experienced staff who all hold relevant clearances to care for children unsupervised. Robust recruitment procedures are in place to ensure new staff are suitable to work with children. The new supervisor has more than adequate qualifications to take daily responsibility for the children in her care.

The children's care and learning is very well organised due to the professional attitude of all the staff, who persist in offering a high quality standard of care. Staff continually attend workshops to develop their understanding and implementation of good practices. Staff are well deployed throughout the session to ensure children are supervised and interacted with effectively. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities throughout the session. All relevant policies and procedures are accessible to all staff and parents and positively reflect the practices of care and nursery education. Children's attendance is recorded accurately, showing exactly how many children are within the group's care at any given time. Staff's practice is fully evaluated every six months against the outcomes for children to identify strengths and weaknesses. Any identified weaknesses are immediately acted upon to strengthen the education and care systems for children. However, sometimes the routine of clearing away and the use of staffing at this time has an impact on children's concentration especially during large group times.

The leadership and management is good. Very thorough procedures are in place to ensure children's development is highly promoted through the educational systems. Planning and focus activities are significantly evaluated to ensure they meet children's differing abilities, needs and learning intentions. Staff confidently initiate new practices to promote learning from ideas gained on training courses, therefore giving children a varied and imaginative way of learning. Children's development is regularly discussed and assessed during sessions, team meetings as well as during staff's lunch hours to ensure children are given appropriate opportunities to develop to their true potential. The group as a whole are very open to ideas and suggestions to continuously improve the education for children and positively reflect on identified weaknesses within the system.

All children's documentation and records are kept safe, secure and confidential. Only staff have access to children's records. Therefore children's welfare is promoted well.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for who it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the setting was given three recommendations to improve the quality of care for children. They were also given two key issues regarding the nursery education.

Within the care, children are now encouraged to eat their snacks together as a group but at small tables seating four or five children together, therefore encouraging their social skills. They help themselves to a good variety of healthy snacks and drinks and are encouraged to talk about what they have been doing during the morning and what they want to do for the remainder of the session. Staff now have effective appraisals once a year. These are regularly assessed and evaluated by the supervisor who efficiently monitors staff's progress through their practices. Staff use new skills well, gained from regularly attended workshops to raise the quality of the child care. New practices are discussed at length during team meetings to ensure they are effectively used with all the children. The setting now has a comprehensive "lost child" policy statement within their policy folder. This is always accessible to parents and promotes clear guidelines for staff in the event of such an incident.

The planning and differentiation within the nursery education system is now very effectively evaluated. This is carried out for focus activities as well as the session as a whole. Staff discuss what went well and what didn't. Records are made of individual children's achievements and then skilfully linked to their development profile. This information is then successfully used to plan for children's future development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that requires the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. 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 staff's deployment is always effectively used, especially in large group time situations

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):

- extend the opportunities for children to use practical mathematical concepts, especially the use of numerals throughout their indoor and outdoor routine and play

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk