

St Thomas Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	228969
Inspection date	24 January 2008
Inspector	Diane Ashplant
Setting Address	St. Thomas Children's Centre Nursery (School), Bell Barn Road, Birmingham, West Midlands, B15 2AF
Telephone number	0121 464 0003
E-mail	head@st-thomascentre-nur.bham.sch.uk
Registered person	The Governing Body of St Thomas Children's Centre Nursery School
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Full day 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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Thomas Children's Centre Nursery opened in 2000 and operates from a dedicated area within St Thomas Children's Centre which is situated in a residential area in the centre of Birmingham. The centre is a multi-agency provision providing childcare and education support to children and families within the surrounding area and also offers a stay and play session and crèche facilities for parents undertaking training. A maximum of 157 children may attend the nursery and nursery school at any one time. The nursery also offers extended provision for children attending the adjoining nursery school from 8.00 to 9.00 and from 15.00 to 18.00. The nursery is open each weekday from 8.00 to 18.00 for 48 weeks of the year. All children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 58 children from six weeks to under five years on roll. Children come from a wide catchment area and attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 16 staff all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is well promoted through having good space to move around both inside and out. The nursery is spacious and the effective use of interconnecting rooms and corridor space allows for children's independent movement between rooms and extra space for small groups and quiet times. Children benefit from lots of fresh air as they regularly use the outdoor area throughout the year. Here they have many opportunities to develop their coordination and physical skills as they enjoy, for example, pedalling and pushing a variety of sit and ride toys and use other equipment to climb and balance. Children are cared for in a very clean and hygienic environment where very efficient cleaning procedures help maintain these high standards. Children themselves are learning about their own health through the daily routine as they, for example, regularly wash hands after toileting and independently take tissues to wipe their noses. All babies' changing and sleeping routines are carefully carried out by staff to protect their health. For example, the nursery's methods for sleeping babies safely are clearly documented and explained to parents. Babies are also checked regularly by staff along with the room temperature and any concerns are highlighted on the blue alert sleep form. Children are well protected in the event of an accident or illness as many staff hold current first aid certificates and there are appropriate procedures for recording these which are generally well maintained.

Children's health is promoted through a well-balanced and nutritious menu which is prepared from a newly designed and equipped kitchen by their own chef and two catering staff. Children enjoy regular healthy snacks such as fresh fruit and vegetables and learn about the importance of food through topic-based activities such as making harvest soup and visiting the Life Education caravan where they learn about dental care. All babies are fed according to parents' wishes and their individual routines which are carefully recorded to ensure all staff are aware. Any individual dietary needs are respected and also documented on the daily register. Children have regular drinks of water and milk throughout the day and can access their own labelled water bottles at any time which ensures they are kept well hydrated.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is very well protected as they are cared for in a new and child-orientated building which has been carefully designed around their safety and where all potential hazards have been addressed, such as low gates to restrict access and safe closing mechanisms on the sliding doors. There are very thorough systems to maintain the security of the building and excellent visibility ensures that all visitors can be seen very easily. Staff are continually alert to the safety of children in their care and to any potential risks. They successfully create a very good balance between allowing children independence and also providing appropriate supervision as they explore their environment, for example as they move freely between rooms or sit on the window steps to read books. This helps children develop a sense of responsibility for their own and other's safety. Staff continually risk assess the nursery and make vigilant checks before children use the outdoor play area, particularly as this is situated in a busy area with people regularly passing by. All fire safety equipment is in place and regular fire drills conducted at different times ensure that children can be safely and quickly evacuated. Any visit or trip outside the building, however small, is thoroughly risk assessed with very stringent procedures of which staff are very clear. All toys and equipment are chosen with regard to safety and suitability and

are superbly well maintained. They are well displayed and set out around the different rooms of the nursery to encourage self-selection and independent access. All appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety of children at all times such as safe collection and these are carefully discussed at induction with all staff so that child safety is always a priority.

Children's welfare is fully safeguarded as staff are alert to any signs and symptoms of possible abuse and clearly know their responsibility to pass on significant concerns appropriately. The head of nursery school is the designated person and has undergone recent safeguarding training and all staff carefully cover all aspects of safeguarding at induction. There is a clear child protection policy shared with parents who sign to confirm their understanding of this.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are part of a very well-organised provision where staff work very well together to provide an exciting and stimulating play and learning environment. Staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn and the 'Birth to three matters' framework around which their planning is based and are already beginning to incorporate the Early Years Foundation Stage within this. The daily programme is essentially centred around the child, so although there is a routine, this is very flexible and child-led and leads naturally on from children's own interests. This means that children are free to make their own play choices which they do eagerly, while staff engage and support them very effectively, extending their interest and learning through their involvement and effective use of questions and suggestions. The environment is bright and very welcoming and children have easy access to an extensive range of stimulating equipment and resources to support their play and learning.

Children have good space to move around in and are encouraged to explore their environment and develop their senses through a wide array of sensory play with different lights and musical instruments or learn to express themselves through many different mediums such as clay, paint and coloured sand and water. They listen intently to stories which come alive through the enthusiasm of staff and the effective use of props such as the bag of animals which each child selects and talks about suggesting, for example, that the peacock looks like a butterfly. Staff know their children very well and monitor their progress through observations which are effectively documented along with good photographic evidence. Children use the outdoor environment daily to enjoy a range of different activities as well as physical play such as chalking, digging and planting and blowing bubbles and watch with excitement as a range of building vehicles pass by. Children who attend the extended provision also benefit from similar staff support and play opportunities and are happy and engaged as they relax and talk to staff and enjoy a full range of activities. For example, staff use the 'popular culture box' based around children's current interests and together enjoy watching a 'Postman Pat' DVD and then write their own letters and envelopes for posting. Children throughout the provision are happy, engaged and fully benefiting from the extensive range of opportunities available and the excellent interaction of the staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are welcomed into this open and friendly environment and respected as individuals by staff who spend lots of time getting to know them and genuinely enjoy the time they share together. This helps children feel comfortable and settle in well. For example, staff are very

warm and responsive to the babies, regularly talking to them and giving them lots of individual attention and eye contact. Each child has their own key worker who helps in the settling-in process and gets to know child, parent and family well, liaising regularly to share information about their progress. Children are developing a sense of their own individuality as staff encourage them to talk about their homes and families. They are free to make individual choices about their play with staff supporting them very well in this as they discover with wonder and enthusiasm the excitement of learning through play. Children are able to access a wide range of toys including a good selection of resources reflecting diversity which helps develop their knowledge of the wider world. Children have regular trips into the local community where they visit the local gardens, pond, shops or enjoy the exciting atmosphere of the German market at Christmas. They thoroughly enjoy visits from the potter and the pianist and learn about different festivals such as Chinese New Year. Children who speak English as an additional language are well supported by all staff including those with bi-lingual skills. Staff are aware that some children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they very effectively liaise with the other professionals and the parents to support them and help them realise their potential. Staff identify a range of target children on which they focus their observations in order to help them receive appropriate support so they can be fully included.

Children's behaviour is very good because staff fully respect them, giving them time and attention and making them feel valued and important. Staff provide excellent role models encouraging children to enjoy and fully benefit from all their play and learning experiences. Children listen, take turns and play well together. They are learning to develop their social awareness as they take responsibility for their actions; for example they look at where they have played and what needs doing to tidy up. Children are really valued by staff who genuinely want them to flourish and blossom in this environment.

Partnership with parents is very good as staff recognise their essential position in their child's life and want to work with them to help their child be happy and achieve their potential. Parents receive clear and useful information about the nursery and are encouraged to discuss all the policies and procedures with their child's key worker at their induction. They are continually kept informed through notice board displays, newsletters and regular discussion with staff who are friendly and very approachable. Parents are encouraged to discuss their child's progress and view their individual profile folder whenever they wish as well as making appointments so they can spend more time with their child's key worker. They share in their children's learning as they attend events like swimming trips, enjoy books from the toy library together or get involved in 'inspire days' where they learn, for example, to take full advantage of the fun and learning opportunities at bath time. Staff have also recently started to invite parents to 'special Fridays' when they can have dinner and share time with the children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The staff at the nursery have successfully created a provision where all staff work together in the best interests of the children. They plan a programme which builds on the children's own interests and offers them time to explore and be creative, time to talk and relax and time to show their initiative in directing their own play. Staff enter enthusiastically into their play and know when it is right to either stand back or to encourage, prompt or reinforce and children clearly benefit from the genuine care and good attention they receive from committed and enthusiastic staff. All appropriate recruitment and selection procedures are in place to ensure the suitability of those who work with the children. A very efficient system of regular team

meetings and staff inset training which includes all staff supports good communication and ensures a consistent ethos and organisation across both nursery and nursery school. All staff have regular performance management reviews which monitor practice and encourage self-evaluation and a commitment to further training. Regular evaluation of the programme and consultation with parents ensures that staff are able to re-assess and re-focus and so successfully meet the outcomes for all children. The nursery is very well managed and there are very good links across to the nursery school and the children's centre which provides an inclusive setting which supports all families.

All the required policies and procedures for the safe and efficient management of the provision are in place. These are well organised and stored to respect confidentiality. Paperwork is shared very effectively with parents. Most of the daily records are well maintained and policies are reviewed, although some such as the safeguarding children's policy does not contain all the current information. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there were three recommendations set in relation to meal choices and cutlery, nappy changing facilities for children in the crèche and the child protection policy. The children have age-appropriate cutlery at meal times with support offered by staff for the less competent and are able to make some choices about their meals according to personal preference. The crèche is no longer part of this provision and all nappy changing procedures in the nursery are carried out very effectively to promote children's health. The child protection policy has been extended to incorporate action in the event of professional abuse and a summary statement is shared effectively with parents. However, further up-dating is needed to include recent developments, as regards the Local Safeguarding Children Board and a recommendation has been set to cover this.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required 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 log may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

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 all documentation for the efficient and safe management of the provision is maintained and up-to-date particularly with regard to the child protection policy.

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