

St Thomas Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY362555
Inspection date	12 June 2008
Inspector	Lisa Jeffries
Setting Address	St Thomas Children Centre, Bell Barn Road, Birmingham, B15 2AF
Telephone number	0121 4642173
E-mail	cynthia.knight@birmingham.gov.uk
Registered person	The St Thomas Children's Centre Management Board
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 outstanding. 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 opened in 2006. It is situated in central Birmingham and operates every weekday during school term time from 09.00 to 15.00. Children have access to a secure, enclosed outdoor play area. The provision is registered to care for a maximum of 18 children and there are currently 30 children on roll. All practitioners who work with the children hold appropriate childcare qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health is extremely well promoted through thorough and consistent health and hygiene procedures. Positive steps are taken to prevent the spread of infection and effective cleaning routines and daily rotas ensure that a high level of hygiene is maintained at all times. Excellent toilet and hand-washing facilities encourage children to move towards independence. Steps are provided and effective signs remind children to wash their hands.

Children actively learn about aspects of a healthy lifestyle and make healthy choices. They voluntarily access drinks throughout the session to ensure they are well hydrated and they choose which fruits they would like to eat for snack. In addition, the setting implements innovative stay and play sessions where parents and children learn about healthy eating and make recipes together. Meals are balanced and nutritious and children's specific dietary requirements are fully met. The setting is working towards a healthy eating award for the whole centre.

Children receive optimum care if they become ill or have an accident. All relevant information is acquired at registration and accident and medication records are consistently maintained. All practitioners are trained to administer paediatric first aid. The setting implements an effective exclusion policy regarding sick children and works collaboratively with external professionals to support children with specific conditions. Consequently, children's health needs are exceptionally well met.

Children's physical play experiences are unreservedly promoted. They enjoy daily access to a dynamic outdoor area where they actively extend all their skills. Children take pleasure exploring the herbs in the sensory garden and they laugh in delight as they spray water from a pump. Hidden pathways and mirrors provide children with hours of entertainment. Indoors, children dance enthusiastically to music and practise climbing, balancing and jumping using soft play shapes. Children strongly benefit from plenty of fresh air and exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children play in extremely well-organised premises which accommodate them comfortably and thoroughly support their care, learning and play. Indoor and outdoor spaces are organised creatively and children learn, explore and develop safely with close adult support. Rooms are very well resourced and child-sized furniture is available throughout the nursery, enabling younger children to develop early mobility skills such as standing and pulling themselves up. All equipment is highly suitable and safe for children to use.

Children's safety is prioritised. Practitioners are attentive and show commitment to minimising risks. For example, thorough risk assessments are conducted regularly and practitioners carry out frequent visual assessments of each area. The outdoor area is fully secure and is checked prior to each use. There is a high level of well-qualified adults to the number of children present and staff are deployed effectively. In addition, children take part in highly organised and safe outings.

Children are learning to take responsibility for their own safety and show considerable awareness of themselves and others. The emergency evacuation procedure is rehearsed sensitively and children know to leave the premises sensibly and quickly in the event of a fire. Access to the provision is fully controlled and vigilantly monitored and there are effective systems for the arrival and collection of children. Comprehensive policies and procedures ensure that all appropriate safety measures are applied to keep children safe.

Practitioners have significant knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection. They are highly knowledgeable about the children in their care and fully intuitive of their needs. Children are unreservedly safeguarded as practitioners are highly experienced at implementing local procedures. Reference guides and relevant contact

numbers are kept close to hand and best practice regarding child protection is consistently and meticulously followed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All children are happy, secure and settled and they are warmly welcomed by practitioners. Close and caring relationships increase children's sense of trust and enable them to develop feelings of self-worth. Children's play and learning is inspired through the practitioner's high quality interaction with them and they develop confidence through encouragement and a high level of support. The practitioner's forward thinking and dedicated attitudes ensure that children's welfare is actively promoted. All children clearly enjoy their time at the setting and benefit from the warm and consistent care.

Children's development is systematically tracked throughout their time at the setting. Sensitive observational assessment and evaluations are used to maximise the effectiveness of future practice and as a result children's individual educational needs are unquestionably met. Children develop a positive disposition towards learning as practitioners are enthusiastic in their approach to teaching. The setting offers an excellent balance of adult-directed and child-initiated learning.

The planning of activities is flexible and reflects children's wide-ranging interests. Children lead their own learning and the environment is gently controlled by practitioners. Children benefit from first-hand experiences and they remain involved in activities for sustained periods of time. Practitioners acknowledge that children learn in different ways and at different rates. Encouraging, friendly and lively approaches are consistently applied to support children and increase their motivation. Children are provided with flexible resources which are used in many different ways to facilitate their play.

Children participate in an extensive variety of activities which excite and captivate them. For example, baking, experimenting with musical instruments, planting bulbs and growing watercress. Art and craft activities are popular and children confidently and enthusiastically use the setting's computer. Practitioners are highly skilled at maximising all learning opportunities and using spontaneous events to increase children's knowledge. They challenge and extend children's thinking through skilful intervention and effective questioning. Consequently, children flourish at the setting; learning new skills and remaining fully engaged in their play.

Children are confident and self-assured, negotiating and interacting with their peers to share ideas and experiences. Resources are used creatively and imaginatively and children take pleasure in dressing up and acting out different roles in the home corner. Children develop self-esteem and take pride in their achievements as they take work home to parents and their artwork is displayed on the setting walls. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for simple tasks and their independence is consistently promoted through everyday activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are valued as individuals and demonstrate an exceedingly strong sense of belonging. Their individual needs are well met as practitioners ensure, through regular discussion and written information from parents, that they are fully aware of the level of care each child requires. Professional and friendly relationships with parents ensures optimum continuity of

care. Comments from parents at inspection demonstrate that they highly regard the level of care their children receive.

A wide range of play resources and planned activities help children to appreciate and value diversity. Practitioners demonstrate a highly positive approach to caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and are dedicated to providing an all-inclusive environment. The setting values linguistic diversity as a strength and children who use English as an additional language are unquestionably supported. For example, practitioners implement wide use of alternative and augmentative communication such as signs and symbols.

Children's behaviour is exemplary and they benefit from the team's consistent and positive approach to behaviour management. Children respect others and know what is expected of them. Older children are familiar with rules and all children enjoy the security of well-established routines. Practitioners manage behaviour sensitively and skilfully, taking into account individual children's levels of understanding and maturity. Children thrive within a nurturing, supportive environment.

Partnership with parents and carers is exceptional. New parents receive a pack containing all essential information and parents are encouraged to share their views through consultations and questionnaires. Daily exchanges of information with practitioners, regular newsletters, displays and notices ensure that parents are kept fully aware of their children's experiences while at the setting. Comments from parents illustrate that they highly value the quality of care their children receive and feel fully included and at ease.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children play and learn in a setting where practitioner's top priority is the children's good health, safety and enjoyment. Rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures ensure all adults are suitable to have regular contact with young children. Practitioners demonstrate clear commitment to ongoing professional development and have a keen interest in training. They are deployed effectively, have an excellent understanding of their roles and an unmistakable sense of purpose. The management are extremely well qualified and experienced and are confident in their vision for the service they provide for children and their families and passionate about their roles. Practitioners work as a cohesive team and all have the expertise to inspire children to learn and develop.

Space and resources are used creatively and effectively to ensure that children are continually stimulated. The free flow structure of the sessions allows children the time and space to initiate and extend their own play. They benefit from the systematic organisation of the setting. Accurate and precise policies and procedures underpin the practice in all areas and are implemented consistently by practitioners. Regular staff meetings ensure the outcomes for all children are promoted exceptionally well. Cohesive records are kept, shared with parents and retained for inspection. Children are nurtured as they are happy, unreservedly safe and comfortable. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

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 the parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

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