

Thorpedene Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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Setting address

Thorpedene Infants School, Delaware Road, Shoeburyness,
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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

Thorpedene Pre-School was registered in January 2011. It operates from a classroom at Thorpedene Infant School in Shoeburyness, Essex. In addition to a play room, the pre-school has the use of outdoor grassed and hard play areas, some of which are covered. It has links with its host school, and with a local Children's Centre. The pre-school serves the local and surrounding areas.

The pre-school is registered to care for 26 children aged between two and five years at any one time. There are currently 16 children on roll, all of whom are within the early years age group. The pre-school receives funding for early education places. It is open from 9am to 12 noon, each weekday during term time. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are currently three staff working with the children, all of whom hold appropriate childcare qualifications. The manager holds a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level three, one assistant holds NVQ at level two and the other assistant is a qualified nursery nurse. The setting receives support from the local authority. It is registered with Ofsted on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

Thorpedene Pre-School is a welcoming and inclusive setting, which meets the needs of its children. Relationships are good, and the children feel known and valued as individuals. As a result, they grow in confidence to try new tasks, make satisfactory progress and play happily together. All the activities provided are available for all children, although there is a limited balance of child-led and adult-led play. Staff have begun to develop a more rigorous system of self-evaluation to identify key strengths and weaknesses. It has a satisfactory capacity to continue improving in the future.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- improve planning to provide a better balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities
- refine the process for self evaluation, with a sharper focus on the impact of the provision on the children's progress
- improve the two-way flow of information between staff and parents about children's starting points and progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Safeguarding practices are good. Staff see ensuring children's safety as their first concern. The suitability of all adults working with the children is checked carefully, and regular risk assessments are carried out to make sure the accommodation, grounds and play activities are safe for the children. Staff have been trained in child protection and childhood first aid and understand their roles well. They are alert to indications of possible ill-treatment and know what to do if they are concerned. The classroom and outside areas are secure from intrusion, and from children slipping out unnoticed. Visitors are carefully checked in and out of the setting and there are good systems in place for circumstances when a child is not collected at the expected time, or by the expected person. Occasional bumps and bruises are treated and recorded meticulously, and reported appropriately to parents. A good key person system is in place and is highly valued by parents, as each child has a designated adult with a particular responsibility for overseeing their welfare. This means a child who is unhappy or anxious is noticed quickly and given consistent support in the setting and at home. As a result of this robust approach to safeguarding, the children feel confident and are relaxed as they play.

Although the manager is new to her post, she brings enthusiasm and a commitment to team working. The staff have begun to implement an action plan for desired improvements, such as promoting closer links with parents through the use of a booklet. Although parents enjoy positive links with the staff, opportunities to gain a complete picture of children's starting points and achievements at home are limited, which impacts on their ability to make the best progress. Staff are beginning to use these booklets to encourage parents to add their ideas about future activities their children will like. Staff have created a useful action plan, but are now working to produce a more systematic self-evaluation scheme. Currently, the analysis does not focus on the progress made by each child while in the setting, which limits its effectiveness.

Staff make suitable use of their new accommodation. The room is spacious and colourful, with provision for the display of children's pictures. Staff willingly undertake additional training to update their skills, and children feel thoroughly at ease with all of them. The setting has a thoughtful and discerning collection of children's books, which parents feel has helped their children develop a love for stories. Many play activities are arranged in such a way that children of any age can participate at an appropriate level. Activities based on cultural themes, such as the Chinese New Year, not only help children appreciate diversity, but also provide opportunities for closer working with the adjacent school. The setting benefits from well established links with the school, and opportunities to share expertise in planning, assessment and self-review are helping the staff to update and refine their systems. Staff also work with colleagues from a nearby children's centre to ensure a consistent approach to the needs of local families. Links with parents and carers are strong. Parents value opportunities to speak to staff, and attend open evenings to find out more about their child's progress. They are keen to put forward their ideas through a survey about how the setting might be improved.

Staff take parents' suggestions very seriously, and have recently reviewed the uniform based on these ideas.

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

Children enjoy coming to the setting, and settle quickly and quietly on arrival to a variety of play equipment set out for them. Children like playing with a floor map of a town and its traffic. They try moving toy cars along the road, but find it too narrow in places. When there is no adult on hand they move on to different activities to sustain their interest. Children work with staff to roll out pieces of pastry dough, and then use number cutters to stamp out numbers from the dough. They recognise the smaller numbers and enjoy cutting the shapes. Others cut out star shapes from templates and colour them with paints. This activity is based on a favourite nursery rhyme and the current theme, which is 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'. Staff chat informally with the children, helping them manage scissors, encouraging them to count the points on a star, and engaging them in discussion about stars. Children benefit from regular access to outdoor play. They take care to wrap up well before going outside and enjoy running, jumping, hopping and riding the scooters and tricycles. Some join an adult with a collection of boxes and sheets and work together to begin to make a den.

Many of these activities make a valuable contribution to children's language, physical and creative development. However, the play opportunities on offer do not always present enough of a challenge for the more able children and lack a good balance of child-led and adult-initiated activities. Some activities, such as the sand and water play, have become routine and do not engage children's interest. Staff make good notes of children's individual achievements in the required areas of the early learning goals. These observations are entered in each child's learning journal, and give some indication of the progress they make over time. However, the setting does not gather full information about children's abilities on entry, to form a secure view of their starting points to help them progress rapidly from the start.

Most children become more confident in speech and staff make very good use of a simplified sign language to help children understand. Children also listen well in small groups and enjoy stories and songs. Older children know the right way to hold a book, and can explain what the pictures show. They recognise their own names, and the sounds of many common letters. They are developing a steady pencil grip and can trace letters recognisably. Children can count to ten or above and usually recognise common shapes, such as squares and triangles. They are comfortable with comparative terms, such as 'bigger' and 'smaller' and 'more' and 'less'. Through themed activities and activity weeks, children are beginning to learn about cultural festivals, such as Chinese New Year and Christmas. Their understanding about the natural world is growing, as children are encouraged to distinguish a range of household pets and wild animals. Children use tools, such as scissors and brushes, safely and sensibly and have a good awareness of the safety of others. Outdoors, they play energetically but take care not to hurt themselves or others. They are confident to try new activities, and they know that they can

approach staff easily if they are unhappy. Children's feelings of security are underpinned by the good safeguarding procedures of the setting. Children also have a very good awareness of nutrition and healthy lifestyles. They understand about the importance of cleanliness, can explain about germs, and know which foods are good for them. They are helpful, positive and friendly. The skills and attitudes they acquire in the setting will help them in their future education.

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?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	3

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	3
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	3
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	3
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	3
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	3
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	3
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	3

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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

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