

St. Thomas's Playgroup Day Care of Children

St. Thomas' Primary School
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 August 2023

Service provided by:
St. Thomas's Playgroup Committee

Service provider number:
SP2003001196

Service no:
CS2003005693

About the service

St. Thomas's Playgroup is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 32 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. The service operates Monday to Friday, term time only.

The service is accommodated in a classroom within St. Thomas's Primary School. The provider is St. Thomas's Playgroup Committee and the service is in partnership with Glasgow City Council. The service makes good use of local area to enhance children's links with their local community.

The service aims to 'provide a safe, stimulating, educational play environment within our establishment. We acknowledge and welcome parents as the key educators of their children."

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 21 August 2023 between 10:00 and 14:00.

The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about this service.

This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with several children using the service and reviewed survey responses from parents whose children attend the service
- spoke with the manager and two staff
- observed practice and staff interactions with children
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children benefited from a skilled staff team who worked very well together and had created a warm, welcoming, inclusive, environment.
- Very Good working relationships between the manager, team and staff provided a quality play experiences for children.
- Children experienced interesting and motivating play and learning opportunities within creative indoor space.
- Children were spoken and listened to by staff, in ways that encouraged them to feel valued and included.
- The manager's leadership approach had helped build, maintain and strengthen the capacity of the team to deliver continuity in children's care.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths supported positive outcomes for children. There were very few areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurture, care and support.

Staff had developed a very good nurturing and inclusive ethos in the service, and this was evidenced through their very warm and caring approach towards children. The interactions between staff and children were responsive and engaging. This helped children feel loved, safe and secure. Children were very comfortable and demonstrated nurturing caring actions towards each other and with staff. One parent told us "My child has had 2 very good years at the playgroup, especially considering the pandemic, my child has still had a lovely nurturing experience, all due to the nurturing care she has received from staff." Respectful interactions took place from staff at the children's level. New children were settling into the service, all staff knew these children well and supported them to use the various experiences that were around them. Staff encouraged children to form positive relationships with each other in the nursery. This resulted in children feeling supported throughout their daily experience.

Personal planning reflected the holistic needs of each child to improve their wellbeing and support positive outcomes. Plans were created in partnership with parents and carers and included a range of information about children's needs. Plans contained the information staff needed to support children and meet their needs and these were reviewed regularly. This enabled staff to respond quickly, sensitively and compassionately to changes in children's lives. Staff knew the children well and confidently described children's individual needs and how they were supported. Staff told us they had worked proactively with other professionals to identify appropriate next steps and strategies to support who have specific needs. They were confident that, in partnership with parents, these children received the support they needed at the right time.

Lunch was a relaxed, unhurried and a sociable experience with children engaging in quality conversations with staff. Parents had the opportunity to provide packed lunches for their child, or use the caterers used by the nursery. Staff told us they encouraged parents to provide healthy lunches. Staff sensitively discussed with children that lunchtime was a new experience for some children in nursery and that they may need some help. The more established children were telling the new children, that they can ask the staff for help opening their packed lunches. Staff were focused on all children and could respond immediately should an emergency, such as choking, occur. We felt that children could gain some additional independence at lunchtime, by pouring their own milk or water to enhance their social skills. (see area for improvement 1)

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun and engaged in a variety of experiences. They had good opportunities to lead their own play and learning, which impacted positively on their development and wellbeing. One parent told us "We notice that our child has gained more skills for learning since coming to the playgroup along with confidence and independence. " All children were happy and confident. Children were playing and interacting well with each other and used a range of resources that supported their curiosity, creativity and problem solving skills. The range of interesting materials, open ended resources, enabled big scale and small world play. This supported children to extend and challenge their thinking.

Children embraced their right to play, have fun, experience success, while learning and developing their skills. The manager and staff worked closely with a local authority leader of early learning, in order that together they used the literacy and numeracy trackers effectively to ensure depth and breadth into children's learning. We seen opportunities to count in each area of the playroom and mark making was available to meet children's interests. We observed opportunities for children to extend language also. Staff used effective questioning to take children's learning forward and were responsive to children's interests. Staff modelled good language, by giving children enough time to answer. Planning Approaches were evident. We seen a staff member help children to understand turn taking with their friends at the imaginative area and children discussed how sharing, resulted in everyone getting a chance to play. Children were engrossed and motivated in their play and were progressing well in all aspects of their development. Various forms of painting along with messy play, measuring cups, mobilo and using sand to problem solve.

Autumn walks resulted in children gathering leaves and using the natural objects in their art expressions. Visitors including the lollipop person came into the nursery, who chatted with children about being road safe aware. The Zoo Lab people also visited nursery as a response to staff observing that some children were interested in zoo animals. All children had the opportunity to explore, being effective citizens through their many fundraising events, which included Children in Need and Red Nose Day. Staff used the children's All About Me books to consistently build upon their skills, in order that learning was continually progressing.

Good use was made of the story sack experiences, to allow children to extend their language skills, by taking the teddy home and go on adventures with the family. Staff told us that this activity was very successful and offered parents the opportunity to be meaningfully involved in supporting their child's learning at home and in nursery. One parent told us "My child loves telling us about all the learning he has gained at playgroup, he is offered lot's of experiences and opportunities and as the staff share this with me I can continue this at home." We also seen evidence of staff sending treasure hunt information home for parents to use with the children as an extension of the children's trip from nursery to the local area.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's health and wellbeing, whilst promoting enjoyment of healthy eating, the manager and staff should improve mealtime experiences.

This should include improved opportunities for children to pour their own milk or water so that all children benefit from a rich mealtime experience. This would also support children to be more independent with this experience.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I can enjoy unhurried snack and mealtimes in a relaxed atmosphere as much as possible' (HSCS 1.35).

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities.

Children benefitted from a welcoming, homely, comfortable environment with some natural light and ventilation. Staff thoughtfully set up the playroom to spark children's curiosity and interests.

The outdoor space was limited, however staff ensured that children took part in achieving their daily mile frequently throughout the week. We saw evidence that children enjoyed this experience and it helped contribute to them developing healthy lifestyles. Staff continued to ensure that children have access to regular outdoor play, by occasionally using the playground in the school and also space in the local church hall, where staff encouraged children to engage in play to push their own boundaries and build self confidence. One parent told us "It would be great if staff got more access to the gym area in the school, to save staff having to go to a venue across the road."

Staff have received appropriate training on infection prevention and control and are confident in ensuring a high quality safe environment for themselves and the children in their care. Children and staff were consistent in washing hands before and after transitions.

The service had safety measures to support a safe and secure environment for children. Maintenance records ensured that any equipment and damaged items were repaired or replaced, and a secure entry system, playroom registers, policies, risk assessments and fire safety drills kept children protected.

Staff kept information about children and their families safely. They only shared sensitive information with those who needed the information. This upheld children's rights to confidentiality and contributed to a sense of trust between the setting and families. Staff shared accident and incident records with parents and carers to reassure them of first aid administered to their child.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The service was well led by an experienced, approachable manager who delegated responsibility appropriately to staff and involved them in the development of the service. One parent told us "Any issue I had with the service were always dealt with and any questions were answered in an appropriate timescale."

We saw rich evidence of children being consulted about their favourite snack and favourite song of the month. Also mind maps demonstrated what children would like to learn about whilst in the service. This gave children a strong message that their views matter.

Quality assurance processes were in place and at an early stage, including improvement plans with realistic targets. There were key improvements identified by the manager and she had plans in place, how these can be developed to include staff, parents and children's views more effectively. The improvements identified for this year by staff included, embedding personalised support for all children and establishing meaningful self-evaluation for self-improvement.

The manager and senior practitioner had recently attended workshops to strengthen self evaluation and improvement planning, these had included:

Self-evaluation cycles

Outcomes and measures

Shared Self-Evaluation

They were working together to evaluate how these skills were best used to further improve the quality of the playgroup, through using current best practice documents. (see area for improvement 1)

Areas for improvement

1. To support improved outcomes for all, the provider should ensure that quality assurance processes are embedded to promote continuous improvement.

This should include, but is not limited to:

- a) including the views of parents and children in evaluations of improvements and to inform new actions;
- b) embedding quality assurance systems which support effective monitoring, tracking and evaluation as part of the continuous improvement process;
- c) ensuring all staff are involved in a meaningful way to drive any improvement actions identified.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HCSC) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.' (HSCS 4.19).

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths supported positive outcomes for children. There were very few areas for improvement.

4.3 Staff Deployment

The manager and staff recognised that continuity of care was important for children. Staff breaks were planned well to minimise disruption and to ensure appropriate levels of staffing, such as during children's lunch time. Very good use was made of the differing experience, knowledge and skills of the staff group to ensure children's experience across the whole day was positive and that they were safe. Staff told us that they worked well together and felt valued by the manager. They told us that they were proud of the nursery and one staff member told us "As a small staff team I feel we work very well in supporting each other as well as the children and their families." Staff had a clear understanding of how children develop and learn. They made very good use of professional development opportunities that link directly to enhanced outcomes for children, these included:

Child Protection Training

Makaton Communication Boards

Literacy for All

Supporting positive behaviour

Attachment led Practice.

Early Numeracy through building blocks play

We could see that staff used this learning well to encourage children to communicate better with each other and staff. Staff waited until children invited them into their play and allowed children the time to problem solve their play. This resulted in better learning outcomes and fun for children.

Staff worked well together and were committed to improving outcomes for children and their families. One staff member told us that the major strength of the service is "The relationship with the children & families " Staff communicated well with each other to ensure they maintained quality interactions with children. Staff had established trusting relationships with parents. All parents we spoke with told us that they were confident in staff skill's to care for their child and support their learning. One parent told us "They are just really lovely ladies and both my kids love them and still love seeing them, now they are at the primary and telling the staff how they are getting on"

Effective team working fostered a warm atmosphere where staff were courteous and respectful. This enabled staff to have time to support, speak and listen to children. Staff recognised that working in partnership with other agencies improved the outcomes for the children.

Staff caring for children were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. They are the regulatory body responsible for registering the social services workforce. They provide public protection by promoting high standards of conduct and practice and support the professional development of those registered with them.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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