



Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY316669
Inspection date	19 June 2006
Inspector	Joanne Graham / Elizabeth Juon
Setting Address	Foxes Piece School, Newfield Road, Marlow, Buckinghamshire, SL7 1JW
Telephone number	
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Registered person	Lisa Carlton
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Pre-School registered in September 2005 with the present owner, and the actual pre-school has been running for nine years. It operates from two classrooms in a separate unit, within the school grounds of Foxes Piece School, in Marlow. A maximum of 40 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open every weekday, term time only from 9.00 to 12.00. There are two outside play areas for the children to use and they can access the school playing

fields regularly.

There are currently 35 children on roll, of whom 20 receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school serves children mainly from the local community and surrounding areas. The setting has provision to support children with special needs and English as an additional language. The setting employs seven staff, of whom one holds a level 3 qualification and one is working towards a level 3 childcare qualification. Two staff hold a level 2 qualification in childcare.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a choice of snacks, which promote healthy eating. They have their dietary needs met because staff are aware of all special requirements and adhere to these. They access drinks during snack time and staff offer additional drinks when the weather is warm. However, children do not have opportunities to access drinking water independently. Staff do not hold a food hygiene certificate to ensure good hygiene practices are maintained whilst preparing snacks. Children learn to understand adequate health and hygiene practices. They wash their hands after playing in the garden, using the toilet and messy activities, and before eating. Staff promote independence adequately through sensitive support and by providing suitable resources, such as child height sinks and toilets, liquid soap and easily accessible paper towels. Children's welfare is supported as staff hold suitable first aid training, the first aid box is easily accessible and accidents are recorded appropriately and signed by parents.

Children take part in regular physical activity both indoors and outdoors boosting their development adequately. They access bikes, scooters and cars, and have opportunities to develop their balancing and climbing skills when they use the small climbing apparatus. Children know they wear sunhats during the warm weather and are happy to keep them on. The environment meets minimal standards concerning cleanliness and some of the toys the children use, are dirty. There are no specific procedures in place to clean the toys, equipment and play areas regularly. Nappy changing procedures and disposal of nappies does not adequately promote good hygiene practices. In addition, although staff wipe the tables before children eat snacks, there is often glue left on the table. This does not suitable promote good hygiene practices.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are secure within the environment and staff follow procedures to keep children safe. For example, making sure staff are present by the entrance at the beginning and end of the sessions and monitor entrance to the premises. Children demonstrate a growing understanding of keeping themselves safe and are clear

about the expectations of staff. For example, children know they hold hands to walk to the outside play area and do not push one another when they line up. Staff assess and reduce most risks. However, they have not evaluated potential hazards when leaving toys and equipment in piles accessible to children nor allowing them to access some toys and equipment that are dirty. Children benefit from a range of safety measures, for example good staff supervision. They play in a spacious environment where they can move around comfortably and safely. However, this environment is not very inviting. Selected toys ensure children have a choice of safe and suitable resources, which are age appropriate and suitable for their stage of development. Staff and children have a good knowledge of the emergency evacuation procedures because these are practised regularly.

There are systems in place to ensure children only leave the setting with known and approved adults and staff maintain relevant documentation adequately. This safeguards children's welfare. Staff have an adequate knowledge of their roles regarding child protection, although none have attended recent training. The policy contains detail that is out of date and some is omitted. The policy does not direct staff in how to proceed if there is an allegation made against them. They have an adequate understanding of signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time at the pre-school and arrive with confidence and self-assurance as staff welcome them into the setting. They are happy and keen to participate in activities and do so with enthusiasm. Some children demonstrate developing concentration skills and increase their language development through asking questions to staff. They especially enjoy going on the treasure hunt and follow the instructions well. Some children are beginning to achieve because staff sit with them and discuss their participation. Staff are not effectively recognising opportunities to extend learning for older and more able children and to adapt activities sufficiently for the younger and less able children.

Children are beginning to form relationships with their peers and staff, and enjoy participating in social group activities, such as snack time. They often invite staff into their play and accept their contributions. There are few opportunities for children to experience spontaneous creativity because activities are very adult led and structured. This does not effectively support their overall learning.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children leave their main carer with self-assurance and keenly join the group for registration. They listen well to others and some confidently share their news and ideas. Children enjoy listening to stories and discuss the pictures with interest. They are beginning to anticipate the wording and some are beginning to recognise that text has meaning. Most children can recognise their names, and find their name cards at registration and snack time. Staff introduce simple counting and subtraction within everyday activities. For example, the children count how many are present after registration and they

subtract numbers when 'buying' current buns, whilst singing the song. Children enjoy using their senses to explore. They touch and squeeze the dough, look through the telescope they make, and listen carefully to the clues to find the treasure. They develop their physical skills well and are able to pedal bikes, propel scooters and use glue spreaders with increasing skill and control.

Staff have a satisfactory knowledge of the early years curriculum, although none have attended recent training. Staff do not sufficiently maintain children's individual achievement records. Therefore, children's development is not accurately recorded, to inform future planning. This does not successfully move children's learning forward. Staff do not sufficiently adapt structured activities and learning opportunities to adequately support younger and less able children and older and more able children. This does not effectively help them achieve. New weekly plans are beginning to link the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage. However, these are not always up to date to assist staff with ensuring sufficient resources and equipment are available to support children's learning and continual development. There is no evaluation completed to assist with future planning or to consider individual children's learning aims.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have opportunities to learn about themselves, each other, the local community and the wider world through planned activities, celebrating festivals, posters, and talking about their home life. They access resources such as books, puzzles, dolls and small world figures, which supports their learning. This fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

All children are welcomed and play an active part in the pre-school because staff value and respect their differences, individuality and family context. They have a designated area to store their personal items, increasing their sense of belonging. The children's behaviour is good. Staff set consistent boundaries and manage behaviour sensitively. Children respond to staff's request to tidy away and to respect the equipment and one another. Children are increasing their understanding of right from wrong and respond to reminders to share and take turns. The group have adequate procedures in place to support children with special needs and for whom English is an additional language. Staff provide satisfactory care and attention to all children, helping them to feel settled and secure. However, they do not always ensure children have sufficient time to complete tasks within the routine, for example, having to leave singing time to go to the bathroom, and staff do not carry out regular observations to be certain of children's individual developmental needs and learning stages to help them achieve.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory and this contributes to the children's wellbeing at the pre-school. Staff discuss the children's achievements and interests with parents contributing to continuity of care for the children. Parents complete relevant paperwork prior to their child starting and have access to the group's policies, procedures and planned topics. However, these are limited, some

lack necessary detail and they are not always easily accessible.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by staff who have an adequate knowledge and understanding of child development. They receive sufficient care and attention from staff, contributing to them feeling confident and secure. Staff deployment is good, maintaining ratios sufficiently. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff work well as a team and understand their role and responsibility. All staff are involved with planning meetings, although these are very occasional and short term planning is not always completed sufficiently. This does not effectively support children's learning. Staff do not access regular training to update and increase their knowledge of childcare. For example, no staff member has attended recent training for child protection, Birth to three matters nor the Foundation Stage. Management have not addressed areas of weaknesses sufficiently and most policies and procedures require additional information and updating.

Staff organise the rooms and set out activities prior to the children arriving. They greet them with enthusiasm and encourage their participation into the group. Staff organise most of the activities adequately, although some children do not have sufficient time to complete these tasks. The routine allows most children time for some free choice, participating in structured activities, accessing outside play, and to enjoy their snacks at their own pace. However, there is no comfortable area for children to rest and at times during changes to rooms children miss out on some activities. Staff have procedures in place to not leave children unsupervised with persons not vetted. This contributes to children's safety. Most legally required documentation that contributes to children's health, safety and wellbeing are in place, although some lacks all required details. For example, the child protection policy and accurately recording children's arrival and departure times. Documentation is stored securely and kept for the requirement periods. The certificate of registration is displayed during operational hours. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the registration. 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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- review and address current nappy changing and disposal procedures and introduce new systems to ensure the setting, toys and equipment are cleaned regularly
- ensure staff preparing food hold suitable qualification and that children consume snacks at tables which are sufficiently cleaned
- make sure toys and equipment are stored safely to reduce potential hazards to children
- adapt the child protection policy to include regulatory information and make sure staff update their knowledge regarding child protection issues
- increase opportunities for children to experience spontaneous creativity
- ensure all children's needs are fully considered during routine changes and make sure staff carry out regular observations of the children so they are fully aware of their developmental levels
- make sure children's arrival and departure times are accurately recorded and policies and procedures are fully reviewed and contain accurate and mandatory detail.

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):

- ensure planned activities consider individual children's learning abilities and are adapted to support younger and less able children and older and more able children
- make sure children's developmental records are regularly updated and maintained and used to inform future planning
- make sure parents are kept informed of their child's developmental progresses and have access to these records. Ensure parents have knowledge of the group's policies and procedures
- make sure staff attend training to increase their understanding of the early

learning goals and that weekly plans consider all children's learning needs

- regularly review and assess the provision to increase awareness of weaknesses to ensure these can be addressed successfully.

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