



Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY313863
Inspection date	10 May 2006
Inspector	Glynis Pratchett

Setting Address	Knowle Primary School, Ringmore Way, Plymouth, Devon, PL5 3QG
Telephone number	07818081192
E-mail	
Registered person	Amanda Hogden
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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Pre-school opened in 2005. It operates from a building in the grounds of Knowle Primary School in Plymouth. The pre-school has one large room and additional facilities as well as a securely enclosed outdoor play area, and also has use of the school hall, music room, the Foundation Stage library and shared resource area. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:15 to 12:00 and from 13:00 to 15:30

during school term times.

There are currently 46 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 36 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from a wide catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children who have special educational needs and also supports a number of children who have English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs five staff. All, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in a warm and clean environment where they can rest and play according to their needs. They thrive because staff follow highly effective procedures and practices which meet the children's health, nutritional and physical needs; such as coloured, cleaning cloths coded for different uses, and wearing aprons and gloves during food preparation. Children are learning the importance of good hygiene routines, can go to the toilet independently and wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating. Their health needs are very well met as staff are diligent in recording accidents and ensuring the environment is clean. All the necessary documentation is in place, including a clear policy about health and hygiene.

Children are beginning to understand the importance of eating a healthy diet. Staff positively encourage children to eat the excellent range of nutritious snacks, these include grapes, apples, carrots, tomatoes and cheese. Children enjoy helping with the preparation of snacks, and snack times are relaxed, social occasions when children sit together and chat to each other. Fresh drinking water is always available and children actively help themselves if they become thirsty. Children's dietary needs are very well met and catered for as all the staff are very aware of any allergies or special requirements. The good procedures ensure children's privacy is maintained.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities ensuring they make good progress in their physical development. They have regular outdoor play throughout the day and lots of fresh air, taking part in activities that develop their physical skills, such as riding bikes and using bats and balls. Children confidently ride their bikes down a small slope and show good control and great enjoyment. They make excellent use of the outside play area. Indoors, children enjoy using the parachute and learn how to use their bodies in different ways during music and movement sessions. Children confidently use an extensive range of equipment that develops their fine motor skills, such as paint brushes, scissors and construction toys.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in premises that are well maintained and effectively organised. The rooms are well laid out allowing children to move freely around in safety between activities. The location of the toilets means children visit them in safety. Children enjoy a secure environment in which to play and they can safely access the vast range of high quality toys and equipment that are well-organised and support enjoyable activities.

Staff are vigilant about ensuring children are kept safe and their attention to safety issues means children's risk of injury is minimised both inside and outside the setting. For example, indoor and outdoor spaces are very well organised creating a stimulating, child-friendly environment that enables children to explore and take risks while being appropriately supervised. Staff are well aware of their responsibilities to report any hazards and carry out regular fire drills. All hazardous items are stored out of reach of the children. Daily risk assessments of the premises and resources ensure staff actively promote children's safety.

Children are protected from harm because staff have a good understanding of what constitutes child protection issues and of their responsibilities in this area. The manager is currently updating her knowledge of child protection issues through on-going training. Children are kept safe when they arrive and depart as there are sound procedures in place and staff are well deployed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children are cheerful and confident within the setting. They enjoy themselves, participating enthusiastically in a range of interesting activities. They are making good progress because staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and the Birth to three matters framework. Children receive good, individual support and the key worker system ensures that each child's individual needs are met effectively. The planning of activities takes account of the age and ability of each child. Children settle very well and enjoy making choices about their play. They play well together and share responsibility for tasks such as tidying up. Children develop good relationships with the staff who are caring, attentive to their needs and help them to achieve. Children have a strong sense of belonging as staff know them very well and value them as individuals. This ensures that their individual needs are very well met and their care and welfare effectively promoted.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Children happily participate in an exciting range of well-planned and stimulating activities. They access an extensive range of well-chosen resources that support their learning across all areas of learning. Children are very involved and engrossed in their play. They take responsibility as they join in routine tasks such as tidying up or helping prepare fruit at snack time. Children show high levels of independence, curiosity and concentration during most activities, for example, when they fit together cogs and watch them rotate.

Children are consistently making good progress in all of the areas of learning. All children are eager to learn, self-assured in their play and confident to try out new experiences. They become excited at finding a large beetle in the outdoor play area and use their knowledge of observing mini-beasts under a microscope to investigate their find. They are learning to be independent as they take themselves to the toilet and wash their hands. Children play in a literate environment where everything is labelled. They show increasing skill in recognising their names. All children have a positive approach to group story time as well as independently using books. They show great enjoyment as the papier-mâché spider is lowered and raised while they repeat the rhyme - 'Incy Wincy Spider'. Children can count confidently and they routinely count during their play; for example, counting as they play with small world toys. They regularly use computers and low technology equipment such as the electronic cogs. Children grapple with new ideas as they watch caterpillars turn into butterflies and learn about the cycle of change. They routinely access a variety of activities that assist their creativity and imaginative play, including water play, paints and junk materials. They use their imagination in role play when they act out family barbecues in the outdoor play area.

Children are well supported in their learning by the good organisation of time and resources and the effective deployment of staff who encourage and guide the children. Staff achieve a good balance between supervised activities and allowing children freedom to create from their imaginations, for example, in role play and painting. Children are clear about expectations for behaviour as a result of clear boundaries set by staff and the emphasis on promoting positive behaviour. They understand the basic rules of the group and show great control as they sit quietly while waiting for the egg timer to finish.

Assessments are regularly undertaken and documented and key worker groups ensure children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. A flexible approach to planning ensures there is an excellent balance between adult and child-led activities. All staff are involved in the planning of activities and weekly plans identify the planned activities for the week and the areas of learning. However, these plans are not clearly focused on what children may learn from the activity and are not clearly linked to the stepping stones through which children progress towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are welcomed and play a full part in the setting because staff value and respect their individuality and the family context for each child. Staff provide excellent role models for children by being calm, polite, respectful and considerate, they have a calm approach to all situations. Children are fully aware of their routines and the clear boundaries set by staff, this helps them to learn to share, take turns and to be considerate to each other. Children's behaviour is excellent.

Children have equal access to activities whatever their gender, ethnicity, religion or ability. They access a wide range of resources, books and activities that promote

their understanding of the wider world and others. They develop an excellent appreciation of diversity through the staffs' awareness of equal opportunities and the promotion and celebration of different festivals, such as Chinese New Year. Children, whose second language is English, are effectively supported by staff who ensure resources, such as other language books, are available to help them settle and have a sense of belonging. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Children with special needs are effectively included and receive excellent support in the setting. Staff work very well with outside agencies and parents to provide additional support. Staff actively promote an inclusive environment particularly through their low-key management of children's specific individual needs. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator supported by the manager, have a very good understanding of their roles, and staff work well together to ensure that any additional needs are identified at an early stage so that appropriate support can be given to children.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. The excellent partnership with parents contributes significantly to children's well-being. Parents meet with their child's key worker when they start in the pre-school and detailed information is gained from and given to parents. This enables appropriate care to be provided for children and keeps parents informed. For example, a comprehensive, well-presented prospectus detailing pertinent policies and procedures, opening and closing times, term dates and staff details is available. Parents are fully involved in their child's care and learning. They can meet with their child's key worker to review their child's progress and development within the curriculum. Annual, written reports provide detailed information about children's progress towards the early learning goals. Parents support their child's learning when library books are sent home. 'Learning packs', such as puzzles, are also sent home at the weekend so that parents are fully involved in their child's learning. The effective, two-way communication between parents and the setting positively impacts on children's progress through the stepping stones. All this forges valuable links for children between home and the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery is good and this has a positive impact on the education and care provided for children. Children's care is greatly enhanced by the good quality leadership and management and the effective organisation of the day care.

The premises are very well organised. Indoor and outdoor spaces are well laid out and good use is made of the large room to maximise play opportunities for children. Children benefit from the well-organised environment where everything runs smoothly. Children also benefit from using the school facilities, such as the shared resource area, where they can develop their imaginations in the pretend vets surgery.

There are good staffing levels and staff are deployed effectively for the benefit of the children. Staff work seamlessly as a team offering appropriate support for children

and providing a secure environment for them. All staff have a relevant, childcare qualification and there is a strong commitment to staff training. This ensures they keep up-to-date with changes in legislation and practices. All required consent forms, policies and documentation are in place, this assists in the smooth running of the setting. However, some require adjusting to ensure they conform to the latest regulations. For example, the system for checking the on-going suitability of the staff.

The leadership and management are good and effective in monitoring and evaluating the funded education and care provision. There is a strong commitment to reviewing, developing and further improving the organisation and practice within the pre-school for the benefit of the children. The setting enjoys very good links with the school. This ensures there is a smooth transition, and continuity of care and learning for children when they move into the lower school. Staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and have a good understanding of how children learn and develop. Staff appraisals and meetings are used to evaluate and monitor practices, improve standards and address any issues. The key worker system is effective and small group work in the school enables staff to build effective relationships with children and ensure they are making good progress in their development.

The setting 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 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.

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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):

- formalise a system for checking the on-going suitability of staff

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 the weekly planning shows clear links to the stepping stones

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