



Little Steps Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	123558
Inspection date	25 September 2006
Inspector	Tina Kelly
Setting Address	1 Lancaster Road, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 4EP
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Registered person	Little Steps Day Nursery
Type of inspection	Integrated
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 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?

Little Steps Nursery is a small, privately owned nursery that was established in 1999. It operates from a house which is situated in a residential area of St Albans. The setting utilises all the downstairs rooms, the staff have facilities upstairs. There is a spacious garden for outside play.

The nursery is registered to care for a maximum of 29 children aged from three months up to five years. There are currently 52 children on roll. This includes 12 funded three year olds and two funded four year olds.

The group opens Monday to Friday, 51 weeks of the year. It operates from 07:45 to 18:15.

Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting is able to support children with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

The Principle is supported by a deputy and a team of seven staff. There are five staff who have qualifications to level three, there are two nursery assistants who hold level two certificates, a nursery assistant works alongside them. There is a pre-school teacher who works with the children for various sessions during the week.

The nursery successfully achieved the Hertfordshire Quality Standards (HQS) award in 2001.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is protected as appropriate records and documents are in place and staff are fully aware of their individual needs. Children are encouraged to develop their independence with good support from staff who monitor the children in the cloakroom area as they learn about personal hygiene and to wash their hands after using the toilet. All children are able to sleep when they need to. The flexible routine ensures that the daily routines can be adapted, their meals may be served later if children sleep through lunchtime. The policy for all staff to wear soft, indoor shoes and for visitors and parents to remove their shoes when they walk through the nursery rooms ensures children play in a clean and well maintained environment.

Children's dietary requirements are recorded, allergies and restrictions are displayed in all areas where the children sit to have their meals so staff are kept fully informed. A full-time cook/house keeper provides the nursery with home cooked meals that are prepared fresh every day. Children eat well, they enjoy their food. The meals provided at the nursery are so popular with the children that a book of 'Secret Recipes' has been developed to sell to parents. Children learn about healthy foods and what is good for them through themes and projects as well as interactive conversations with staff during the well managed meal and snack times. Children are involved in the growing of fruit, vegetables and flowers in the nursery garden, they are able to explain how they planted the seeds and had 'too many' lettuces and were able to take some home.

Children make excellent progress in their physical development. They have a wide range of opportunities both inside and outside to take part in well planned activities that develop their growing skills. The older children are excited as they take part in organised games. They work both in teams and as individuals as they learn new rules and listen to the clear instructions given to them. Children show great pleasure as they complete the set task and sit back down to show they are 'home'.

The children develop self-confidence in their physical skills as they move with control and co-ordination. Children enjoy running, climbing and using ride on toys, they are beginning to recognise the changes that happen to their bodies when active. Staff encourage discussion around being hot and fast beating hearts.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well maintained, welcoming and child friendly environment. The site is secure, a CCTV camera monitors outside areas. Visitors are asked to provide evidence of their identity if they are not known to the staff. Children's safety is maintained if an incident occurs in a playroom as staff may call for assistance through an intercom system. Young children in the 'Baby Garden' room play in an area with soft, impact absorbent flooring, if a baby tumbles as they are learning to walk they are unlikely to hurt themselves. An outings book is used to record the places that are to be visited, names of children and staff involved alongside the mobile phone number to be used in the case of an emergency to ensure the children's safety at all times.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe as part of everyday activities, themes and topics. They are becoming aware of the safety of others as the nursery routine enables children of all ages to play together at some time during the day. Older children are very aware of the limitations of the 'babies' they are kind and careful as they play with them. Children use good quality equipment that is appropriate to their needs, low-level storage in the play rooms enables children to access toys and resources safely.

Children are protected by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection issues. Information with regards to leaflets and referral systems in line with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board are readily available. The nursery does not have a policy in the case of an allegation made against a member of staff. Parents are not aware of what actions to take if they have concerns. There is no clear procedure to be followed to ensure the safety of the children in such circumstances.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled within the nursery setting. They are motivated and become engrossed in a broad range of activities relevant to their various ages and stages of their development. Children are cared for in three core groups, they are able to join other key groups at certain times of their day. Young children may return to the 'Baby Garden' to sleep or have lunch if they need additional support. All children have opportunities to mix with children of different ages, babies usually join their siblings for lunch. The free play time in the Play Space room after lunch is well managed with the children of different ages. The children's experiences are extended as they interact and play alongside each other before going for a sleep or to take part in the days planned activities. The older children move into the Loft or the Studio rooms which provide age appropriate resources and opportunities to extend their learning.

Staff working with the younger children have a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, plans, activities and the children's achievements are monitored and recorded in line with the different aspects and components which build on the young children's experiences and their developing skills. Activities are well presented, staff take time to prepare resources to make them inviting for the children. Babies are curious as they experience a large sand tray full of paper shreadings. They approach cautiously but with encouragement from

staff who show the children by example what they can do they soon climb in and start grasping and throwing this imaginative resource around the room. Children laugh as they put the shreds on the head of the staff who show great delight in extending the children's play experience.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good, children have a positive attitude to learning, they are keen to take part in new experiences and practice their existing skills. Staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation stage, a team of three staff work closely together to plan, adapt and present a comprehensive curriculum based on the stepping stones and the early learning goals. Planning shows that children are provided with a broad range of activities and experiences that are suited to their different needs. Assessments are thorough and the information is used for future planning to ensure children have a solid foundation to their learning. Staff are good role models, they work with the children to extend their language and comprehension so they are confident and able to understand and adapt to new experiences. Children learn in various styles, they may have one to one support for more complex mathematical and mark making activities. They learn to share resources in small groups and they learn to negotiate and to take turns in larger group activities.

Children are confident, they talk to each other and to adults, sharing their experiences both from their time at nursery and from home. Children are learning to link sounds and letters as they can identify their names on their pegs and with name cards as they register themselves as they start their afternoon session. Staff prompt discussion about building letters to represent words and to identify letters and sounds that are linked to their names. Activities are comprehensively planned around the early learning goals. The nursery teacher explained to the children that they were to have their tea outside, to have a picnic. She showed them that she had been given a piece of paper to make a list of the children present and what they would like to make up in their picnic. Children waited quite patiently to give their names which were duly listed. The group was then asked to think about what they would like to eat and what is healthy for them. The children responded enthusiastically, they expressed their likes and dislikes, making suggestions and decisions about their tea. Their teacher explained that she was writing down all of the things that the children had told her and she showed them how the words were listed and to be given to the cook so she would know what was needed for tea. Children came up with a range of very different food stuffs they wanted, they showed a good understanding of what was good for them in relation to fruit and vegetables, they also expressed their liking for white bread although the benefits of brown bread was clearly explained to them. The whole activity presented the children with opportunities to recall their preferences and to anticipate what they would do later in the day. They showed an understanding that the list was information to be shared with others. Children are experiencing different concepts of time as they know that they would not eat 'now' but would have their tea 'later'. Staff have high expectations, they explain clearly and encourage children to think.

Children are asked to predict when building with large boxes, will they balance, will it fit, and to judge if the different shaped boxes are bigger or smaller. Their mathematical and conceptual language is extended and put into practice in everyday experiences.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have developed strong relationships with their carers and teachers. Their individual needs are well met as staff ensure all children are treated with equal respect and their backgrounds are valued. Photographs of the children are displayed at low-level throughout the care rooms, they are developing a sense of belonging as they recognise themselves and their friends as they play. Parents are offered a weeks settling in period where they can stay and be involved in their children's new experiences and be confident when they leave them in the care of the nursery.

Children learn about diversity and the wider world through well planned activities, themes and projects linked to all aspects of their play. When outside a game was developed for children to run to areas designated as different countries, they learn about various aspects of the cultures in their play.

Children are developing good social skills, they sit together at snack time and show good manners as they wait for children to be served before starting to eat. Staff are sensitive and calm, children are learning about the abilities of the younger children as they understand they may start to eat as they are 'only babies' so this is allowed.

Comprehensive records are kept to monitor children's achievements, the nursery has a designated special educational needs co-ordinator (Senco). Strategies are in place to ensure children receive appropriate support with regards to language and special needs.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is being fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Parents are kept well informed about children's activities, newsletters and email are used to share information on a regular basis. The detail displayed in the foyer is used for day to day news and fundraising ideas. Parents are not well informed about the education provided by the nursery. There is some detail about the early years curriculum available in the parent information folder shared with parents as their children come into the nursery. Written information is not available for new parents with regard to how children learn as they work towards the stepping stones and the early learning goals. Parents are not made aware of the committed staff team that is involved in the planning and implementation of the nursery education, detail about funding or the registration and inspection process by Ofsted.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Knowledgeable staff understand and follow the setting's policies and procedures which promote children's well-being and supports them in all areas of their care and learning. Appropriated recruitment processes are in place to ensure all staff working with the children are safe to do so. Practitioners are well deployed which ensures children receive appropriate adult attention at all times. Staff and visitors sign in when arriving at the nursery but the detail is not recorded

when staff leave the site for their breaks, this means that in the case of an emergency a correct record of staff on site is not available.

The leadership and management is good, the team of three staff who are responsible for the planning and implementation of the nursery education work well together. The nursery teacher comes in to work with the children during the week. She supports the staff and maintains the children's records of achievements and progression. The grouping of children, staffing rotas and the different areas for play and learning provide all children with a secure routine in a range of stimulating settings. Staff are well supported, a mentoring system is in place, supervision and regular staff meetings provide consistent support for their professional development. The senior staff and the registered provider work effectively together to ensure the provision offers an inclusive environment where every child matters.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last care inspection the nursery was given two recommendations; to develop and review documents on a regular basis and to ensure staff hold appropriate food hygiene certificates. The nursery continues to review and amend documents on a regular basis, they ensure staff have appropriate skills to maintain good hygiene procedures and to ensure the children's well-being at meal times.

At the time of the last education inspection the nursery was given two recommendations; to develop resources to extend the children's learning with regards to technology and knowledge and understanding of different cultures and beliefs. Children have many opportunities to access a range of well planned resources and experiences that extend their understanding of everyday technology. They are beginning to learn about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection. 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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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):

- develop written procedures for allegations of abuse made against a member of staff or a volunteer and ensure this information is made available to parents
- ensure records show times when staff leave the site to monitor staff movement at all times.

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):

- review information for parents to ensure they are fully informed about the nursery education provided for children based on the Foundation stage and the Early learning goals.

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