



Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY305214
Inspection date	12 July 2006
Inspector	June Fielden
Setting Address	St Martins School, Ranmore Road, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1HW
Telephone number	0870 446 0585
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Registered person	Pipkins Nurseries Limited
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 Nursery School is one of four nurseries run by Pipkins Nurseries Ltd. It originally opened in 1992 and re-registered in 2005. It operates from a mobile classroom on site at St Martins School, on the outskirts of Dorking town centre. A maximum of 18 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09:00 to 11:45 for 36 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area.

There are currently 31 children aged from two to under five on roll. Of these, 21 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The nursery supports children with English as an additional language.

The nursery employs six members of staff. Of these, one holds appropriate early years qualifications and two staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, friendly environment. Effective hygiene routines are maintained to ensure children's wellbeing. For example, children wash their hands before they eat and after using the toilet. They use roller towels and liquid soap to avoid the risk of cross-contamination. Children eat from tables cleaned with antibacterial spray to protect them from infection. They learn healthy habits, and understand the need to wipe their nose and place the soiled tissue in the bin. Staff raise children's awareness of health issues, discussing with them the need to apply sun cream in hot weather.

Children help themselves to water at any time, to ensure they are not thirsty. They are mainly provided with healthy options at snack time, including fruit, bread sticks and cheese, to meet their nutritional needs. Children serve each other with the fruit, but are not involved in preparing the snack to further develop their independence. Staff are aware of children's allergies and ensure they are not offered food that is unsuitable for them.

Children are provided with extensive opportunities to exercise and strengthen their muscles, using the school playground and the adjacent area of grass. They practise pushing and pulling actions on the small bikes in the outdoor area, showing perseverance when they find it difficult to use the pedals. Children show a good awareness of the space around them and negotiate other children and equipment without accidents. They exercise large muscle skills using the bats, balls and quoits for throwing, kicking and catching. Staff support children having difficulty hitting a ball. As a result they keep on trying, showing pleasure when they achieve success. Children can rest at any time if they are tired, and use the settee and cushions provided in the book area.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children move around freely in the nursery, and are able to access many of the resources they wish to use for themselves. Bright, colourful wall displays make the nursery welcoming to parents and children. These include examples of children's work, boosting their self-esteem. The classroom is kept at the correct temperature for the children, as the supervisor opens the windows in the summer to ensure it does not get too hot. Space is limited, but well organised by staff to allow maximum room for as many activities as possible. The classroom is arranged into different areas and contains an effective range of toys and equipment, appropriate to the age and stage of development of the children that attend. Well organised storage facilities for resources are available to the nursery, both inside the classroom and on the playground.

A broad range of safety measures are in place to protect children's welfare. Detailed daily risk assessments are completed by staff to provide a safe environment for children to play in. Fire drills are held twice a term to make children aware of the procedure to follow in the event of a fire. The nursery reinforces children's understanding by participating in the evacuation procedure held by the school. There is a secure system for the arrival and departure of children,

and the main door is alarmed, to alert staff if it is opened by children or visitors. However, there is currently a minor hazard, the glass mirror used by children in the role play area, which impacts on their safety.

Children are protected from harm because all staff have recently attended training in child protection, and are aware of the signs of abuse. If they suspect abuse they will report their concerns to the designated member of staff, who will inform the appropriate authority.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children settle well on arrival at the nursery and have a secure relationship with staff. Consequently, they are happy to approach them and ask questions. Younger children are engaged in the activities provided, although they are not always aimed specifically at their needs. They complete the same tasks as older children, after they have been simplified to their level. Staff are becoming familiar with the Birth to three matters framework, which they have started to incorporate into the planning for the setting as a whole. Children are supported by staff and given attention appropriate to their needs. They choose what they want to do throughout most of the session and have opportunities to use their imagination and develop their creativity. As there is limited space to make all the resources accessible to children, staff have made up a photograph album with pictures of all the activities that are available. Children can show staff the picture of the toy they wish to play with and they will get it out for them to use. This system is helpful for younger children, who may not know the names of all the equipment, or be aware of what is available to them.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching takes place throughout the morning, with whole group input at registration time and just before snack time. Learning also takes place during focused group work, which is fairly structured, and while completing other activities set up by staff, with sufficient opportunities for child-led activities. Staff involve themselves in children's play, teaching them skills as they participate in their games. For example, a member of staff sits with the audience when a group of children play with the puppet theatre. She makes comments on the show they were putting on and asks questions to extend and develop children's play. However, children currently find some of the sessions too lengthy to sustain their interest. Consequently, at these times children become bored and distracted.

The nursery are in the process of implementing a new system of planning, which they intend to adapt over a period of time to meet the needs of the setting. The long term plans cover all areas of learning from the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and staff have an acceptable understanding of this document. They have also produced environment plans which show how each area of the classroom will be used. The daily plans show the main focus activity and leave space for staff to add the activities children have chosen for themselves during the day, under the appropriate area of learning. This allows staff to see what is popular with children and to take account of the areas of the curriculum being covered informally. Regular observations are made of children by their key worker, which are later added to their records. The nursery completes Surrey child profiles which show that children are making satisfactory progress in

the Foundation Stage. Some samples of children's work are kept with their records, but are not always annotated to assist staff in recording children's progress.

Children are encouraged to speak in front of the whole group and share their ideas at registration time, boosting their self-esteem and developing their listening skills. Staff use this as an opportunity to discuss recent events and issues that are of interest to them in the world around them, for example, the World Cup football matches that had just taken place. Children develop their independence by recognising their name for self registration on arrival at the nursery. When they have completed a picture or piece of work they find a peg with their name written on it and hang up their own work. Staff socialise with children as they play, modelling how to engage others in conversation. Consequently, children relate to each other in an acceptable manner. Chatting together as they complete activities, and approaching other children in the playground and the classroom, to include them in their games. As a result, there are few arguments and disagreements. Staff develop children's understanding of maths through everyday activities. Children count how many are present after registration and staff sit with children while they play in the water tray, introducing the language of measure.

Children practise using small muscle skills while playing with construction equipment and controlling the child size mouse on the computer, which is generally available throughout the session. Clear wall displays show that children are becoming familiar with the world around them. For example, one board shows the life cycles of different creatures, such as frogs and butterflies, investigating how they change over time. Another display shows a map of the area in which children live, and includes photographs of nursery children and their families. This relates to work children have completed to assist them in taking an interest in people who are familiar to them and the environment in which they live. This work shows that children engage in creative activities for a purpose, connected to the topic they are studying. Children know that their efforts are valued, as their pictures are put on display. They are reminded by staff to write their name on all their work, introducing to them the concept of words being used to communicate meaning. Mark making resources are accessible to children throughout nursery sessions, allowing children to attempt writing for different purposes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children celebrate a range of festivals to promote their understanding of diversity. Staff involve them in charity fundraising events to help different groups, making children aware of the needs of others in society. The group are at present working with the school on a project to raise money to make a garden area at the back of the classroom they use. Children are assisting in designing this area, which will take into account the needs of children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Children generally behave well, as acceptable behaviour management strategies are used by staff. Children are encouraged by praise, and staff reinforce good behaviour, rather than commenting on their negative actions. Staff lead by example, and model the use of good manners. Distraction is used when children misbehave and parents are approached to discuss methods used at home, to ensure continuity of care.

Children are generally very accepting of each other and settle quickly on arrival at the nursery, showing a sense of belonging to the group. They share toys and equipment amicably, especially in the playground. Children are happy to approach staff, as they gain their attention straight away, enabling them to feel affirmed and acknowledged by them. The setting fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Adequate measures are in place to keep parents informed about the setting, and they have a sound relationship with staff. The nursery shares policies and procedures with them and parents believe their children are well cared for. They are aware of the key worker responsible for their child. Although there is not a parents rota in place, to encourage their involvement, they are aware that they can stay at the nursery for a session if they wish. Details of activities children will be involved in, requests for parents assistance in fundraising, and an explanation of how the money raised will be spent are on display. Parents are invited into the nursery for events such as Sports Day and one of the notice-boards has information to make parents aware of the different areas of learning. There are regular newsletters, which include information about what children will be learning. Parents complete a form providing information about their child when they start at the nursery. However, they are not subsequently invited to share details about their child's progress at home, which could be useful to staff. Parents are informed about their child's progress in the Foundation Stage just before they start school, but not all take the opportunities provided to consult staff at any other times while they are receiving early years education. Consequently, some parents are unaware of children's progress and whether there are any areas in which they can provide assistance for their child. The nursery has recently updated its complaints procedure, but parents are not yet aware of the new requirements.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery has a daily routine in place, allowing children to become familiar with the pattern of their morning. Children are protected from harm when visitors are present, as they sign in and out of the nursery and are never left on their own with members of the group. Staff and children's records are kept securely on the premises to ensure confidentiality is maintained, and parents can see their child's file on request. Appropriate recruitment, induction and training procedures are in place to ensure children's wellbeing. There are arrangements to provide suitably qualified staff to cover for the supervisor in the event of her absence, to ensure children's welfare.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. The owner has overall responsibility for the nursery, and the supervisor attends to the day to day running of the provision. The supervisor does not have key worker responsibilities, which are delegated to other members of staff, leaving her free for managerial duties. She shares responsibility for areas such as child protection with the owner. Suitable procedures for advertising, staff selection and induction are in place. These are organised by the owner, with the supervisor being involved in the interview process. The supervisor is not yet completely familiar with the details of the new policies, procedures and planning currently being put in place. This impacts on the smooth

running of the nursery, resulting in sessions when children's interest in activities is not always sustained. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide.

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):

- ensure the setting is free from hazards, such as the mirror
- ensure parents are aware of the updated complaints procedure.

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 activity sessions are arranged in a manner that sustains the interest of all children
- ensure parents are aware of the opportunities to discuss children's progress with staff.

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