



Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	305341
Inspection date	09 June 2006
Inspector	Sylvia Cornock
Setting Address	Daven Primary School, New Street, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 3AH
Telephone number	01260 297924
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Pre-School
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 is run by a parents committee. It opened in 1994 and operates from two rooms in a mobile building in the grounds of Daven Primary School. It is situated within walking distance of Congleton town. A maximum of 44 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 11.45 and Tuesday to Friday 13.00 to 15.30 term time only. All children have access to a secure, enclosed, outdoor play

area.

There are currently 52 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 35 children receive funding for early education. Children mainly attend from the immediate area. The pre-school currently have no children with learning difficulties or disabilities and no children attending who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs nine members of staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications.

The setting receives support from an early years teacher and other advisory staff from the local authority, and are members of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Generally good health and hygiene procedures help prevent infection and cross contamination, as staff ensure all children wash their hands with anti-bacterial liquid soap before snack time and after using the toilet. Children are developing a good awareness of simple hygiene procedures. Older children show awareness of the purpose of hand washing in removing germs. Staff have clearly established routines for cleaning surfaces, toys and equipment. These measures help to protect children's good health.

Children are well protected due to the satisfactory sickness, medication, accident and emergency procedures. A clear sickness policy helps protect children from the spread of infection. Staff appropriately record all medicines administered, however, they do not obtain parents written permission beforehand, this compromises children's health and safety. Many staff hold up to date first aid qualifications, helping to meet children's needs in the event of an accident or emergency.

Children are developing an awareness of the importance of healthy eating as they look forward to and enjoy snack time, where they choose from fruit, vegetables or bread sticks. They are offered drinks with their snacks, however, they are not offered fresh drinking water at all times, such as when playing outside in the hot weather. This does not promote their good health and well-being.

Children learn to develop a healthy lifestyle through daily outdoor play and their physical development is satisfactorily promoted. Children have daily access to a range of outdoor play equipment and indoor climbing and balancing apparatus. They show skill and coordination as they weave in and out on various wheeled toys, playing with footballs, jumping from one stepping stone to another and throwing the bean bags onto the correct colour.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The pre-School provides facilities which are welcoming. Displays of children's work are bright and attractive helping children's sense of belonging. Children are able to move around safely in the environment. Rooms are arranged well to provide different areas for play and snack time. Children have access to a range of clean, safe and well organised equipment in each room. Toys and equipment are suitable for different ages and abilities, meeting children's needs effectively. Children develop independence as they select from the easily accessible equipment.

Safety is satisfactory overall as procedures are in place to protect children from hazards and dangers as staff complete regular risks assessments. However, a low drain within the outside play area creates a hazard and compromises children's safety. Staff understand their responsibilities to maintain a safe environment and carry out a daily safety check. Children learn to keep themselves safe through discussion with staff, for example, about the importance of not running indoors because of the danger of hurting themselves or others. Some evacuation practises have been completed, however, all children have not had the opportunity to practise or discuss how to evacuate the premises in an emergency, this compromises children's safety. Some staff have a satisfactory awareness of the procedures to be followed regarding child protection, however, not all staff are secure in their knowledge and understanding, or have access to the telephone numbers for the local social services or police. This compromises children's safety and welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff establish positive relationships with children, helping them to feel settled and secure. Children benefit from a range of activities which promote their all-round development. Good intervention from most staff encourages children to think and make connections. Children learn to explore and investigate using their senses feeling the textures of different materials as they complete puppets in craft activities. They enjoy looking at books before snack time, however, the presentation and condition of books does not encourage children to freely access them throughout the session. Children engage in mathematical activities and have the opportunity to view the environment around them. They show enthusiasm in creative activities and experimenting with mark making. Staff are beginning to introduce the Birth to three matters framework into the planning and practice of children's learning.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals which is reflected in the range of varied and interesting activities planned. As a result children make satisfactory progress. Children are settled and happy due to the calm, positive interaction from staff. Children are interested and involved in the activities provided and respond well as staff question them effectively to develop learning. Children are secure in the routines of the pre-school and cooperate well together in role play. They show their independence as they choose activities, put on clothing and attend

to their personal needs, however, their independence could be further developed at snack time. They are becoming confident to talk and express ideas at news sharing time, as they describe the item they have brought in from home to compliment the colour of the week 'yellow'. Children show the ability to communicate meaning through mark making as they happily write lists in the role play area. They learn to count and to use their mathematical knowledge to solve simple problems, such as how many chairs do we need for the story 'three billy goats gruff'. Children learn to explore and investigate as they plant and grow flowers in the outside tubs. They show confidence in using a computer and electronic equipment such as toy cash registers to support their learning. Their physical skills are developed well through regular use of a good range of outdoor and indoor equipment. Children play imaginatively in the role play home corner and express themselves using a variety of media and musical activities.

Staff have an awareness of children's capabilities and in their day to day teaching and they build on this to develop learning. The key worker system ensures that observations of children's learning are recorded and shared by staff. However, these are not used effectively to ensure children's individual next steps of learning are appropriately planned. At times the structure of the day does not meet the needs of all children present due to children not able to finish their chosen activity, such as when using the computer. This makes it difficult for children to gain maximum benefit from the activities provided.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children behave well as staff give them plenty of praise and support for their efforts and achievements. Staff act as good role models, showing respect and consideration for children and each other. Staff meet individual needs well with regard to behaviour management, offering a clear and consistent approach which takes into account children's stage of development. Children respond well and as a result show a growing awareness of right and wrong.

All children are included in the activities provided and individual needs are generally well met. This helps to develop children's confidence and self-esteem. Staff work effectively with parents and outside agencies to ensure that children who have learning difficulties are appropriately catered for and are included, helping to promote their all-round development. Children gain awareness of their local environment and the diversity of the wider world through a satisfactory selection of resources and activities that promote positive images. Their awareness is promoted through topic work relating to 'People who help us' and posters displayed of different cultures. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Children benefit from a very positive partnership with parents and carers. A settling in policy helps children to be reassured and feel that they belong. Parents receive a good level of written information about the pre-school and its provision, including information on the six areas of learning for nursery education. The entrance area and

notice board are used well to provide information about day to day events and how children's learning is developed. Parents are encouraged to share information about their child when they join the pre-school and continue to share information through regular informal talks with staff. This effective communication between parent and staff helps to promote children's welfare, safety and learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the satisfactory leadership of the nursery. The providers and manager work together to ensure that children are provided with a satisfactory quality of care and education. They work to promote the pre-school's mission statement which refers to 'caring and sharing and respect for all'. This ethos is reflected in all areas of the pre-school and is visibly promoted by staff. This means that children are cared for in a positive and supportive environment which effectively promotes their social and moral development. The settings commitment to improvement is reflected in the programme for staff training. This commitment helps to maintain and improve the quality of care and learning for children.

Most staff are well qualified and have relevant experience. This has positive effect on children's learning and welfare. Staffing levels are organised to ensure that they are within the required ratios at all times and that children have a good level of attention and support.

Children are safeguarded as the provider makes rigorous checks to ensure staff suitability before they are employed. Most policies and procedures are effectively in place and contribute to positive outcomes for children. Space and resources are organised well to promote children's safety, care and learning.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the setting has improved children's safety by reviewing and updating their policies and procedures for complaints, behaviour management, child protection and uncollected child. They have obtained written consent from parents for medical treatment in the event of an emergency and have reviewed the planning to provide more opportunities for the younger children to support their learning.

The previous nursery education inspection recommended that the pre-school further developed their planning, to extend opportunities for children in mathematics, music, writing and awareness of the wider world. They were also recommended to ensure consistency of activities provided between the morning and afternoon sessions. The introduction of daily planning sheets showing what the children are expected to learn linked to the areas of learning and the use of the step by step profiles and observation are monitored and evaluated. The supervisors on each of the morning and afternoon sessions encourage children to complete their own ideas and ensure

they have equal access to all experiences. Staff provide opportunities and encourage children to use their mathematical skills and language throughout the sessions. They have added a writing table and writing area, enabling children to practice their writing skills. They have developed children's awareness of the wider world, cultures and beliefs by providing more resources, celebrating festivals and visits to places of interest. The purchase of new musical equipment and introduction of musical instruments provide children with a variety of opportunities. These measures enhance children's development and learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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):

- develop a system for carrying out evacuations of the premises to ensure all children have a good understanding of keeping themselves safe in an emergency. Make the drain in the outside play area free from hazards to promote children's safety and well-being
- ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibility and the procedures to be followed in accordance with the Local Safeguarding Children Boards and that the relevant telephone numbers are easily accessible with regards to child protection
- ensure parents permission is obtained before administering medication and ensure fresh drinking water is available to children 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):

- consider how books are displayed and presented in the book corner, so that children know how to use books for enjoyment, and allow children to complete their chosen activity enabling them to fulfil their desired achievement before moving them on to other planned activities. Promote children's independence at snack time
- ensure the observations completed of children's individual achievements are used appropriately in the planning of their next steps to promote their progress and learning.

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