



# Stepping Stones Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY331414
<b>Inspection date</b>	28 September 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Pamela Edna Friling
<b>Setting Address</b>	Ashcroft Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1RA
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<b>Registered person</b>	Bright Horizons Family Solutions Ltd.
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 Day Nursery is owned by Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited. The nursery was first registered in 1995 and became part of the Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited group of nurseries in 2006. The nursery operates in detached premises in the centre of Cirencester and children attend from the town and surrounding villages. A maximum of 78 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 49 children on roll. This number includes 15 children in receipt of funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery has experience of caring for children with special needs. The nursery employs 22 staff, 11 of whom, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Four staff are working towards a recognised early year's qualification. The nursery receives support from the Local Authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from effective procedures and practices for meeting their individual physical and nutritional needs. Children take part in a varied range of activities which enable them to learn about good health and encourage them to take responsibility for their own personal hygiene. Tissues are easily available for the children to use independently with even the youngest toddlers blowing their own noses and disposing of the tissue appropriately. The staff support all children well in their quest for independent personal care. For example, staff form good role models as they wash their hands with the babies and young children following nappy changing. Older children are able to describe why they should wash their hands 'to get rid of dirt before we eat'.

Children of all ages develop their physical skills daily in both the indoor play rooms and the outdoor playground. They have daily opportunities to develop their running, jumping, pedalling and pushing skills. However, at present, planning for development of children's individual physical skills is limited. Younger and less confident children are supported effectively to join in activities at their own level and explore methods of moving. For example, less confident children are supported as they learn to slide down the pole from the climbing frame. The Birth to three matters framework has been introduced to extend adult understanding of individual children's stage of development.

Children's individual dietary and feeding needs are addressed well through discussion with parents. Staff show good understanding of special diets and the issues involved in catering for individual needs and preferences. Colourful individual placemats are used to ensure staff are aware of special dietary needs and preferences. However, these mats are not consistently used by all rooms for all snacks and meals. Children benefit from the balanced main meal menu, with local suppliers used for fresh meat, fish and produce. Children are encouraged to eat a range of fresh fruit and vegetables at most snack and meal times. However, healthy options are not consistently available at each snack time to allow children a choice or to encourage discussion of healthy items. Children have access to drinks of water at all times, with even the youngest toddlers able to reach the jug to pour their own drinks. Children's health is well promoted through clear routines for administration of medication and first aid. A clear policy for the exclusion of children with illness protects the health of all. Records contain clear detail and all required signatures.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for within an environment which is both safe and secure. Risk of accidental injury is minimised by the thorough and well documented risk assessment of potential hazards within the playrooms and outdoor area. Staff are well deployed to support children and are vigilant in their approach to safety and supervision. The nursery premises are secure with effective coded entry systems to ensure only permitted adults enter the building.

Children have a good awareness of safety issues and are learning about keeping themselves safe. Vigilant supervision and clear explanation extends young children's understanding of safety issues. For example, older children know how to stay safe when playing outside, recognising when it is safe to slide or jump from the climbing frame. Furniture and play resources are of very good quality. Children of all ages develop good independence as they access resources freely for themselves. These are stored invitingly on low shelves and in clear boxes to aid individual choice. Some children's pictures and paintings are attractively displayed around the rooms. However, at present, display boards are high and the youngest children have difficulty seeing displayed items. Staff compensate for this with a few low level photographs of the children engaged in activities.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted through staff knowledge and understanding of child protection issues and rigorous company policy documents detailing procedures. Robust staff clearance procedures ensure children are cared for by suitable adults.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children of all ages enjoy their time at nursery and are supported well by the staff as they play and learn. Children arrive with enthusiasm and quickly settle to their chosen activity. They are relaxed in the company of the attentive staff. Children are encouraged to express themselves through careful staff questioning and genuine interest in individual conversation. Children benefit from a new key worker system that allows them to form a secure relationship with a member of staff who is responsible for their care and wellbeing. A new developmental and educational monitoring system, still in its infancy throughout the nursery, will utilise staff observations and assessments as a basis for planning for individual children. When fully implemented the system will encourage all children to build on what they already know and can do and demonstrate close links with both the Foundation Stage of learning and the Birth to three matters framework.

As a result of the sensitive care offered, children are happy, secure and confident. Children are very independent. They make choices from all available resources and activities, take care of their personal care needs and assist with daily routines. Low-level storage of toys encourages self-reliance. Children, from the youngest babies to the pre-school children, enjoy opportunities to be independently creative as they paint, glue and stick, sing and take part in role-play scenarios. Babies are encouraged to explore their environment, look at themselves in mirrors and discover the contents of interesting treasure baskets. Toddlers explore how high they can build towers of blocks, practise domestic skills as they change nappies on dolls and prepare and serve pretend food.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Children benefit from the staff's childcare experience and their satisfactory understanding of how children learn. Staff interaction and questioning encourage children to think and solve problems as they take part in both self-initiated and adult-led play activities. Staff observe and assess children as they play and learn. These observational notes and assessments, recently introduced and not yet fully

implemented in the nursery, will be used to inform future plans and set targets for individual children's next stage of learning.

Children are very interested and motivated. At registration and circle times, they answer their names confidently and wait quietly for their turn to give their news. For example, a child excitedly informed the group 'do you know I had a spider in my bedroom last night'. Children develop good relationships with staff and other children in the group. They learn to co-operate, share and work well together. For example, children take turns and share well during use of the computer and during role play. Children enjoy a sense of completion as they are allowed to finish activities to their satisfaction before being encouraged to move to the next item in the daily routine. Children are encouraged to be independent in their personal care and activity choices. They find their own aprons for art work and assist competently in wiping tables prior to snack time. They show good levels of concentration. For example, children spend a significant length of time completing their paintings and listen well to group stories.

Children are developing confident communication skills. Most are happy to talk in large and small groups, to familiar adults. They use language effectively to organise their play as they take on roles during imaginative play scenarios. For example, declaring 'come on we are going to the cinema' as four children settle themselves on the sofa to watch an imaginary film. Staff effectively extend children's ideas as they enquire as to which film the children are watching. Children benefit from opportunities to enjoy books, make marks, paint, draw and crayon. However, low-level labelling and text within the room is limited and children are not encouraged to use their developing mark making skills in a meaningful way throughout the play areas. For example, writing materials are not provided in all activity areas within the room to encourage children to record their observations, to make lists or to name their own work. Children demonstrate an interest in numbers and counting as they use the manipulative and mathematics centre. Children compare shapes as they complete a wide variety of jigsaws. They demonstrate a good appreciation of positional language as they describe the position as they move the cursor on the computer screen.

Children enjoy exploring and investigating many different media as they mix their own paint colours. They show understanding of the world as they describe 'the moon is making a reflection' in response to a story and 'my deer has antlers' as paintings are produced. Children investigate the properties of vegetables as they go to the shop to buy them and on their return take the opportunity to both taste and draw them. Children use technology confidently to support their learning. They engage well in imaginative play based on both their first hand and imaginary experiences. For example 'cooking', 'washing up' and 'sunbathing on the beach' in addition to trips to the 'cinema' and the 'ball'. Children assign roles as they organise their play. For example, assigning the role of the 'handsome prince' to the inspector observing the play. Children safely and competently use a range of tools and equipment, for example pencils, scissors, glue sticks and play dough tools.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Company policies, operating procedures, child development and education information is shared with parents to ensure they are fully

conversant with how their child will be cared for and taught. Young children sleep and eat according to their individual daily routine following consultation with their parents. Information is exchanged effectively to establish a process of shared care for children of all ages. Information regarding the child's day at nursery is shared with the parents of babies and toddlers via a daily diary giving information on food, drink, sleep, nappy changes and enjoyed activities. At present, information on individual development and educational progress is limited. Individual child profile folders, containing progress records and linked to the Birth to three matters framework or the Foundation stage of learning, do not yet contain any information. When implemented these folders will, in addition to containing progress records, provide parents with photographic evidence, written observations of their child at play and examples of their child's work. Some information is displayed regarding activities within each area of the nursery.

Children behave well and are co-operative with both staff and each other. Staff form calm role models for the children. Older children are able to discuss the boundaries for acceptable behaviour and offer explanation as to why some behaviour is inappropriate. Children are developing confidence and self-esteem through regular praise and recognition of effort. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children have use of good books and resources reflecting culture, race and disability. They share well and are encouraged to be kind and thoughtful to others. Children show kindness and consideration for each other as they collect tissues for their friends, pour each other drinks and assist with painting aprons. Children beam with pride as they are praised for being kind, helpful and thoughtful to others and when friends show interest in their art work.

There are clear company policies for identification and assessment of children with individual special needs. However, support for children with individual special needs is limited. At present, the nursery does not have a designated member of staff with specific training in, or responsibility for, encouraging staff awareness of the identification and assessment of children with special needs.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management of the nursery is satisfactory. There is a clear vision for the future development of the nursery based on detailed company operating procedures and experience with their other nurseries. Staff show motivation and a willingness to move forward with company methods. The provision of new resources, equipment and play items has enabled the rearrangement of the play rooms into designated learning centres linked to the Foundation Stage curriculum areas. The rearrangement of the play areas has contributed to the level of independent choice available to children of all ages with all resources low level and independently accessible. However, play rooms and learning centres are not labelled effectively to allow children to experience a variety of text. Children are encouraged in their developing mark making skills through provision of a range of interesting writing materials in a designated writing area. However, materials are not provided in other learning areas for children to record their observations or make marks representing their name on any work. The educational programme provides a wide range of experiences to enable children to make sound progress towards the early learning goals. New systems for activity planning, based on observation of

children as they play, have recently been introduced throughout the nursery. Staff have yet to consolidate their understanding of the new system and to use their detailed observations effectively to plan for individual children's next stage of learning and development. At present the nursery does not have a member of staff with training in the support of children with special needs. Children gain experience of the local environment through expeditions to the local park and shops. Links to local schools and groups are still to be forged.

The children settle well to familiar surroundings and show good understanding of well-established daily routines. Their individual dietary needs are met. However, snack foods do not consistently promote healthy eating or allow for individual choice. Children's welfare is promoted through the well-organised recording systems and written operating procedures which meet the requirements of registration. Robust systems are in place to ensure staff are appropriately qualified and cleared for work with the children. Regular staff meetings ensure all staff are able to contribute to nursery planning and development. Staff induction is effective with ongoing training needs, career and personal progression routes highlighted. Training opportunities are offered to all staff to extend their understanding of the needs of the range of children attending the nursery. Input is welcomed from company representatives and from the Local Authority to improve and refine methods employed in the care and education of the children. 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**

Since registration there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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**

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 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):

- promote children's awareness of a healthy diet through the consistent provision of healthy snack options
- ensure staff have a clear understanding of the identification and assessment of children with individual special needs (also applies to nursery education).

### **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):

- further develop the systems for observation, planning and assessment to ensure that staff have a competent understanding of the Foundation Stage of learning and how the new system is used to support individual children to build on what they already know and can do
- ensure children experience a text rich environment where they are able to use their developing mark making skills in a meaningful way as they play.

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