



Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	509754
Inspection date	14 December 2006
Inspector	Sandra Hornsby
Setting Address	Church Road, Leverington, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 5DD
Telephone number	01945 467576
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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 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 was previously called Leverington playgroup. It opened in its new building in September 2002 and is committee run. It operates from the grounds of the Leverington primary school, which is near the town of Wisbech in Lincolnshire and serves the local community.

The pre-school is registered to care for 16 children between the ages of two and under five years. There are currently 18 children on roll. Of these, 16 children are in receipt of funding for early education. Children attended for a variety of sessions.

The pre-school opens five days a week during term-time and provides nine sessions, five in the morning and four in the afternoon.

Five full-time and part-time staff work with the children, all of whom have early years qualifications at NVQ levels two and three.

The setting receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and a Special Needs Co-ordinator.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children are learning about keeping themselves clean and healthy as they go about their daily activities. Staff explain to children about washing hands and pictures on the bathroom walls help the younger and less able children understand the simple routines. Children talk about why they need to wash their hands. The staff are good role models and children see them cleaning the bathroom and tables and washing their hands before any preparation of food. This contributes to preventing cross-infection and helps children to understand about personal hygiene tasks.

There are individual records and medical information in place for children so staff are aware of allergies, food requirements and any health issues. Consequently, staff are able to care for the children appropriately and in accordance to their needs. However, parents have not had the opportunity to discuss and give their permission for their children to receive emergency medical treatment, preventing children receiving the immediate care they may require. Four staff are first aid trained and are able to deal with children's accidents in accordance to their training. There is a sick children's policy in place which further protects children from cross-infection, as parents have agreed to keep sick children at home. If children are unwell at nursery they are treated with compassion and are cared for by trained staff, helping them to feel comfortable and safe, until their parents collect them.

Children are offered simple healthy snacks which the staff prepare, for example, scones and jam and fruit. Children chat about what they are eating and the staff ask questions about where the food comes from and how it tastes. Children independently spread the butter and jam and feed themselves. Younger children are assisted if they need it. This helps children to develop independence and self assurance about their own abilities. Displays on the wall show pictures of vegetables and fruit and there are posters on healthy eating, but these issues are not addressed during the lunch time and children are not encouraged to participate in a social gathering. This prevents children from further developing and extending their knowledge about food, healthy eating and developing their social interaction skills. Free drinking water is available at all times and children confidently help themselves, especially after a dance session. This encourages children to think about their personal needs.

Children have planned opportunities for outside and inside physical play. Wellington boots are available so children can use the garden in all weathers. Small equipment, digging areas, grass and bikes allow children to explore the environment and use their physical skills to move about with balance, skill and co-ordination. The children also have regular opportunities for music

and movement sessions indoors where they sing songs enthusiastically, do action rhymes and dance. This helps them to keep fit and healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff's welcoming approach and the colourful and stimulating child centred environment help children to feel comfortable and safe in the setting. They have access to a wide selection of colourful, age appropriate toys and equipment, which they can access freely and independently. This helps to promote their decision making skills and pride when they can make decisions and choices for themselves. Staff organise the indoor play space effectively, allowing children to move about between activities and use a variety of equipment in a safe way. For example, children build a large wooden train set all around the room, they can stick, dress-up and have a snack. Children benefit from the good range of safety measures and risk assessments that staff carry out. For example, socket and radiator covers, fire evacuation procedures and having a secure outside play area. The staff talk to the children about their own safety and help them understand the consequence of their actions such as swinging back on two chair legs. Children understand they might fall back so they are beginning to understand how to keep themselves safe and free from accidents.

The whole staff team are aware of their responsibilities regarding child protection, and they attend training to ensure their knowledge is kept up to date. They understand child protection issues and have regard to their own policy and recording procedures. Staff know how to proceed if they have concerns about a child in their care. Consequently, effective policies and procedures and working in partnership with the Local Authority promotes and safeguards children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework in their planning which leads into the Foundation Stage Curriculum planning. All children are assessed in a similar way, however staff are aware of the children's level of development, so they plan individually to meet the children's needs. This supports the young children and those with special needs. All children have opportunities to explore and experiment in their surroundings through well-planned activities that are appropriate for their age and stage of development. Children can independently choose from the activities that are planned, and from toys and resources that are not readily available.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage Curriculum and are using very good planning to help children explore all the six areas of learning. Good observations and good knowledge of the children in their care help the staff plan a stimulating and interesting curriculum and provide resources and activities to help children progress to the next level. Children are actively involved in their learning as they move about the room using toys and equipment of their choice. They use high levels of concentration on their tasks and show an interest in new children and adults in the setting and ask questions enthusiastically. Staff create a stimulating environment where children's work is well presented and clearly labelled. This allows the children to develop a strong sense of

belonging and a feeling of pride. Staff are good role models and demonstrate a good attitude towards learning by presenting activities in an interesting and enthusiastic manner.

Children can work well individually and as a groups where they are co-operating, turn taking and sharing. They confidently move about the room asking questions and negotiating with their peers. Children speak clearly and confidently expressing ideas and sharing experiences. Children enjoy books and listen intently to stories. Children have lots of opportunities to use books for pleasure and fun, where they listen to staff and share books with their friends. They are also learning to use books to find out information, this encourages children to explore new topics and information and ask questions. For example, children are curious as to why children in some countries do not wear shoes.

Although writing is displayed around the nursery on children's work it is mainly done by staff. Children have few obvious opportunities to explore writing in different situations, consequently affecting their awareness and understanding about the different purposes of writing. Children are learning about numbers, shapes and sizes through practical everyday activities. For example, children use mathematical language during snack time, such as various numbers, round and half. While children are setting out a train set staff ask lots of open ended questions about sizes and shapes of the track and finding places for the pieces to fit in. This helps children to think about space and measurements.

Children are learning about different cultures through well-planned topic work, toys and equipment. Staff use books to further develop the children's curiosity and their understanding about people being different. Photographs are displayed featuring the children's holidays with 'George' the nursery bear, helping children to remember and share their experiences. Children use their imagination and creativity enthusiastically during music sessions. The children are familiar with and confidently act out scenes and scenarios for their Nativity play in an excited and enthusiastic manner. The children have a good repertoire of songs and action rhymes.

Staff make very good use of daily routines, planning, free play and spontaneous events to extend children's thinking and learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff are very aware of the needs of all the children. They have a good collection of documents in place with factual information about the children. Parents and staff share information about the children's likes dislikes and additional needs, this helps staff to support them effectively and treat children as individuals. Staff are sensitive to children's feelings and encourage them to express their anxieties or fears through 'Molly', who is a special doll that the children adore. She plays a large part in nursery life and is involved in a lot of the children's daily activities. Children enjoy her presence and get some comfort as they dress her up and talk to her. Children's art work and photographs displayed around the room are helping children develop a sense of belonging and pride. Children are surrounded by resources and activities that promote their knowledge and understanding about diversity, for example, books, pictures, cooking activities, and festival celebrations. Children are encouraged to ask questions to help them make sense of the differences in the world around them. Children want to know and understand why children

in other countries live in different types of houses and do not wear shoes. The play opportunities given by staff help children to explore their curiosity at their own pace and build on what they already know.

There are good systems in place to support children with special needs and/or disabilities. Children benefit as they are well supported by staff who have training in special needs and who have close links with the Local Authority in relation to additional services. Staff respond to the children in a caring and kind way, being there to help them achieve their individual goals.

Spiritual, moral, social, cultural development is fostered. The children are well behaved, and co-operate with each other and staff. The children play alongside each other very well, with only minor upsets which the staff deal with in a caring and considerate way, taking into consideration the child's level of development. They help the children to resolve their difficulties by helping them to understand what is wrong and what they need to do to make it better. Children are able to negotiate. For example, when a child broke another child's train set he was asked to help put it back together, which he did happily.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. The relationship is friendly and supportive and parents feel welcomed into the setting, where they are encouraged to get involved in their children's learning and development. Parents and staff share information on a regular basis which helps children to receive individual care and attention and ensures continuity of care. Individual plans are used to help monitor and evaluate children's progress and these are shared regularly with parents, this helps to keep them up to date about their children's stage and progress towards the early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are benefiting from a well organised setting where staff are using their skills and experience to support children's learning. The staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the pre-school. As the staff have a key worker system in place they know and understand the children very well. The staff are well supported by the committee and managers of the settings. They offer regular training opportunities and staff meetings.

Leadership and Management are good. There are effective systems in place for monitoring and evaluating the quality of nursery education. There are assessments and staff evaluate the continued progression of the children through the stepping stones. The staff team have a good understanding about how to provide quality care. The committee and staff team are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and they understand what they need to do to ensure they continue meeting the needs of the children and local community. The staff speak to parents regularly and keep them up to date with events.

All required documentation regarding the care of children is in place. The documents are up to date, well organised and appropriately stored with awareness to confidentiality.

The setting meets the needs for the range of children for whom they provide.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were two recommendations made at the last inspection. The nursery now keep a good clear written record of any medication administered to children, with prior written parental consent. This protects children's medical needs and welfare.

Children have regular opportunities for adult led and free use of books for pleasure and enjoyment. Through good planning and assessments staff ensure that activities take into account the needs of both the younger and the more able children very effectively, supporting their learning needs.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that require 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.

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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):

- request written permission from parents to seek emergency medical treatment/advice

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):

- provide consistent opportunities for children to learn about food, understand how it affects their bodies and use meal times to help children further develop their social skills (also applies to nursery education)
- provide children with consistent opportunities to write names and attempt mark making and writing for a variety of purposes.

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