



Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY221441
Inspection date	25 September 2006
Inspector	Ann Doubleday / Josephine Ann Northend
Setting Address	Blossomgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire, HG4 2AJ
Telephone number	07970 021116
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Registered person	Stepping Stones
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 Nursery and Out of School Club is one of three nurseries run by an individual proprietor. It opened in April 2002 and operates from two rooms in a church building in Ripon. The nursery serves the local area. A maximum of 40 children may attend the provision at any one time. The group is open Monday to Friday from 07.30 to 18.30 throughout the year excluding Christmas and Bank Holidays.

There are currently 55 children from three to 11 years on roll. This includes 10 children who receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The out of school club is provided in a separate room. It operates before and after school and during school holidays. The group supports children with physical disabilities and learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are seven full time members of staff. Five of the staff have early years qualifications and two are currently working towards a childcare qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's physical development is supported well, with opportunities to have physical exercise each day. They play outdoors in the enclosed area using a range of equipment including footballs, wheeled toys, small slides and play parachute. They also participate well in team games. Children are beginning to learn how exercise affects their bodies. For example, they know they are hot after physical activity. They can rest and be active according to their individual needs. Children learn the importance of good hygiene through daily routines. They are encouraged to wash their hands regularly before meals and after using the toilet, and know why they need to do so.

Systems are in place for addressing children's health needs. For example, many staff hold a relevant first aid qualification and appropriate documentation is used for the recording of accidents and medication. Although parents sign medication records to give written consent, they do not sign to acknowledge when medication has been given. The effective use of a sick children's policy enables the children's health needs to be met.

Children begin to understand the benefits of a healthy diet through the promotion of generally healthy meals and snacks and through activities undertaken, for example, they make posters about healthy foods and fresh fruit is offered each day. Drinking water is readily available throughout the session and is accessed by the children. Staff are aware of and meet children's individual dietary needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean, warm and welcoming environment where most risks are identified and minimised. However, the flooring in the eating area is uneven and presents a tripping hazard, the drain in the outside play area is unprotected and mats are not used under small slides. This means the premises do not fully promote children's safety. There is a clear health and safety statement in place and staff give priority to helping children understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, they are taught to use equipment safely. A written risk assessment is completed for outings and consent is gained from parents.

There is a very good range of developmentally appropriate resources, which are well-organised in child-height furniture to encourage independent access. The security of the premises is good and there are clear lost and uncollected child policies in place. The high adult-to-child ratios ensure children are well supervised and supports children's safety.

The welfare of children is satisfactorily protected. Staff have a sound understanding of their role and responsibilities under child protection. There are policies and procedures in place, however, the policies are not sufficiently robust as they do not include informing Ofsted of any allegations against staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the setting. They arrive happy and eager to participate, and are making good progress. Close and caring relationships with staff increase the children's sense of trust and help them develop a strong sense of self. Children are developing good relationships with each other and their communication skills are well supported through good adult-to-child interactions.

Children move around the rooms freely. They select their own activities and take part in adult directed activities. Play opportunities are purposeful and developmentally appropriate, resulting in children being motivated and interested. This is evident in the good planning and evaluation of activities.

There are clear settling in procedures in place for children, which include gaining information from parents about their child's routines and care. Staff are sensitive to and meet children's individual needs well. Children generally behave well and are developing a sense of right and wrong. They respond well to staff who clearly explain why they should not do something.

Children that attend at the beginning and the end of the school day enjoy their time to rest or be active according to their individual needs. Age appropriate activities are set out prior to their arrival, their creative work is displayed in their main play area and a good range of activities are easily accessed by all the children. The children are confident, aware of the rules in place and are quick to engage in activities, creating a pleasant industrious environment.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children enjoy their time at the group and achieve well, because staff use their good knowledge of the Foundation Stage to provide high quality nursery education. Key staff have attended Foundation Stage training. They plan and prepare well an interesting programme of activities across the six areas of learning and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in the planning and delivery of focused activities. Assessment systems are in place and are completed well. They link clearly to the Foundation Stage curriculum and show how children are progressing. However, they are not used sufficiently well to inform planning, in order to differentiate for the individual learning needs of all children. Parents contribute to their child's initial and on-going assessment. The good use of resources and the clearly defined activity areas support the learning opportunities offered to children. Staff use good questioning skills to further extend children's thoughts and ideas. They involve themselves appropriately in children's activities and offer good support and praise to them.

Children are developing good communication skills. They show confidence in speaking to others and hold a conversation for extended periods of time. They initiate conversations and ask simple

questions. Children are developing a sense of time, as they remember what they did yesterday. They are developing good writing skills and hold pencils correctly as they make good use of the mark making area. Children form recognisable marks and letters. Although they have opportunities to recognise their own names, no differentiation is used and the activity is too difficult for younger children. They are becoming aware of the initial letter sounds in words, particularly the initial letter of their name. Children have good access to books, handle them well and listen attentively to stories, predicting what is going to happen next.

Children use a computer well. They control the mouse and complete simple programs confidently. They also have good access to programmable toys. They are developing their understanding of number and count reliably beyond five. Children recognise and name shapes confidently, they understand and are using size language well. They have some opportunities to use problem solving and calculating, but this is not extended into everyday routines and activities.

Children are developing a good sense of space as they sit on the mat for circle and story time. They show good control as they handle tools and equipment and develop good levels of hand-eye co-ordination, for example, as they successfully thread beads and complete patterns with nails and shapes. Children have many opportunities for large physical exercise in order to develop their gross motor skills. For example, they kick balls confidently and use bats and balls skilfully.

The children are confident in their play and learning and persist for extended periods of time at activities. They show pride in their own achievements and are eager to show what they can do. They are generally well-behaved and are beginning to show care and concern for others. Children show good interest in their environment and living things, for example, they look after plants outside. They explore well using a variety of materials, such as sand, water, and binoculars. They talk about their own families and are developing a good understanding of other cultures and beliefs through the use of interesting resources, visitors to the setting and well-planned activities. Children are developing some self-care skills. For example, they learn to put on their own coats and wash their own hands. However, this is not extended into everyday routines. They are developing a secure knowledge of health and bodily awareness, for example, they understand why they need to wash their hands before eating and know the effects of exercise on their bodies.

Children recognise and can name many colours. They access and use well a range of creative resources and use their imagination well in role play. Children use a range of resources to construct with a purpose in mind and build three-dimensional structures confidently. They use their senses to explore a variety of materials, for example, as they smell the flowers and explore the texture of cooked rice. Children join in and enjoy familiar songs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are warmly welcomed and staff ensure resources are readily available. Planned activities are undertaken that positively represent the local and wider community. A good range of resources is available reflecting other cultures and races. This helps increase children's awareness of diversity and develop a positive attitude to others. The staff's understanding of each child's

needs is used well to encourage a sense of security and belonging. There is a clear special needs statement in place and there is an identified special needs co-ordinator who has received some relevant training. Children with disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are integrated well and all children are included in activities.

Children are generally well-behaved and polite in response to the expectations of staff. They take turns and are beginning to show care and concern for others. Older children are involved in setting their rules and they have made posters which are displayed. This supports their ownership of the rules. Children's understanding of right and wrong is increased through the good example set and gentle reminders they receive from staff. This means children's spiritual moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Children benefit from the two-way sharing of information. Parents receive regular newsletters, information about the Foundation Stage and further information is displayed around the setting for their attention. They are involved in the initial and on going assessments of their child. They receive regular formal feedback on their child's developmental progress. Parents are encouraged to continue their child's learning at home, for example, through the use of the book lending system.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Space is laid out to maximise play opportunities for children, which contributes to them being happy and settled. Children move around confidently and independently. They initiate their own play and learning well as they move freely between the activity areas.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good and promotes the children's learning. Many of the staff have early years qualifications. The management promotes staff attendance at relevant training. The knowledge gained by staff is used to further support children's care and welfare. Staff appraisals are undertaken regularly and a peer observation system has recently been introduced. This enables the manager to be aware of and address the strengths and weakness of the provision and be pro-active in continuously seeking ways to improve. All key staff have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how children learn. Consequently, children's progress towards the early learning goals is good.

Adult-to-child ratios are met effectively and there is key worker system in place. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and work well together as a team. There are clear and robust staff recruitment, vetting and induction procedures in place. This ensures children's welfare is safeguarded.

Required documents are well-organised, readily available and stored confidentially. The complaints policy has been updated to reflect recent changes in legislation. The detailed policies and procedures in place are shared well with staff to appropriately promote the welfare, care and learning of the children.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to organise the outdoor equipment so that it does not present a hazard to staff, to request permission from parents for children to handle pets, and to ensure parents consistently sign the medication records.

The outdoor equipment is stored in its own dedicated area so that it no longer poses a hazard. Written permission is sought from parents for children to handle pets, and staff monitor the medication records, to ensure parents have signed the written consent. This ensures children's welfare is safeguarded.

At the last education inspection, the provider agreed to develop children's understanding of their natural environment, their understanding of addition and subtraction opportunities and to practise simple problem solving skills. Practical experiences and activities are now provided which develop children's understanding of the natural environment. Opportunities for children to develop addition and subtraction and to practise problem solving skills are available, however, they are not extended well into everyday routines and activities.

The provider also agreed to provide opportunities to extend children's experience of rhythmic movement to music; hand eye co-ordination, and to explore natural materials in a variety of ways. These have now been developed well and are evident in planning and delivery of everyday activities.

The provider also agreed to extend monitoring and evaluation of the provision across the early years curriculum and extend the opportunities for parents to make a formal contribution to children's records of achievement and planned activities. Monitoring and evaluation across the provision has developed well, however, it is not used fully to inform planning. Parents complete an initial assessment of their child; they are involved in their child's learning at home and are kept informed of their child's progress through written reports and open evenings.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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 complaint 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 parents sign the medication records to acknowledge the entry
- assess the risks to children in relation to the flooring; the drains outside and the use of outside play equipment and take action to minimise these.

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 use of assessment to inform planning in order to extend the challenges offered to older and more able children
- extend the opportunities for children to use calculation and simple problem solving in everyday routines.

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