



Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	200780
Inspection date	14 November 2006
Inspector	Lynn Morris
Setting Address	Whitestone Infant School, Magyar Crescent, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, CV11 4SQ
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Registered person	Diane Friswell
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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Pre-School opened in 1997. It operates from two rooms in a mobile building within the grounds of Whitestone Infants School on the outskirts of Nuneaton, Warwickshire.

A maximum of 40 children may attend the setting at any one time. The group is open 09:00 to 11:30 and 12:30 to 15:00 term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed play area.

There are currently 68 children aged from three years to four years on roll. Of these, 59 children receive funding for early education. Children come mainly from the immediate local area and surrounding areas. The group supports children with learning disabilities and disabilities and also children who speak English as an additional language.

The group employs 12 members of staff. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The group is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health within the setting is supported very well and children benefit from good hygiene practices with regard to hand washing. They wash their hands after messy play, after using the toilet and before having their snacks with little prompting from staff members. They learn the importance of keeping their hands clean by using liquid soap dispensers and drying their hands on paper towels, which reduces the risk of cross-infection. They can see photographs of different stages of children washing their hands, which helps them to follow and understand the procedure. They see staff cleaning the tables after play and before their snacks. Their well-being is supported because most staff members are trained in first aid and properly stocked first aid boxes are available in the room. Medicine and accident records are accurately and confidentially kept. However, there are no consent forms to give medication and to seek emergency medical treatment.

Children learn about healthy eating. They have a self-service snack time where they choose from a variety of fruit and drinks. They become independent as they learn to pour their drinks and choose their fruit. Staff use the opportunity to talk about the fruit and to help children learn the names of different fruit. They choose from water, milk or juice to drink and they know that they can ask for a drink at any time. Additional drinks are made available outside during hot weather. Children sit in social groups and enjoy conversations during snack time.

Children use an excellent range of equipment at the setting, which promotes physical well-being and helps to keep them healthy. They use large climbing equipment, slides, hoops and wobble boards to help them climb and balance and they play hopscotch and use crates and planks to learn how to jump and move with control. They use a good range of wheeled toys and can pedal with confidence and negotiate obstacles to move around. They use the school playground for circle games and they have activities to help them understand how their bodies work. For example, after going outside without coats children discover that they need coats to keep warm. They then run around and are encouraged afterwards to feel their heart beat to see what effect running has had on their bodies. They take part in a daily programme called Fit to Learn, which is designed to improve children's physical skills and to motivate them to move around developing their fine and gross motor skills

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in clean, safe and healthy environment with a good range of equipment to meet their needs and keep them safe. Very good staff to child ratios ensure that children cannot leave the premises unnoticed. Children are kept safe by the procedures used when they arrive and depart from the group. For example, children enter and leave the building using a

one-way system. They are closely supervised by staff, who position themselves at strategic points around the rooms.

Children play in areas where risks to children have been identified and addressed and good procedures for daily safety checks ensure that areas used and the garden are clean, safe and secure before children arrive. For example, plug sockets are covered, gates are secure and heaters are guarded. Children learn how to keep themselves safe. They are reminded not to run around inside the building and they wear coloured bands to identify how many children can play safely at an activity or outside. Through talks and books they learn about talking to strangers and they have access to resources to use in the garden to learn how to cross a road safely. The risk of accidents to children is minimised by the layout of the room and the completion of comprehensive risk assessments.

Children's safety and well-being is considered by having a written fire procedure displayed on the wall and children practise emergency evacuations every half term. However, records kept for the emergency evacuations do not contain sufficient details to evaluate the practise. They are protected from risk of harm or abuse by the setting's child protection policies and staff's secure knowledge of local procedures to safeguard children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are happy, very confident and enthusiastic in the warm and welcoming environment created by staff. They are independent and confidently self-select where they want to play and choose toys and activities from an excellent range of resources. They thrive and develop well because staff provide exceptionally well balanced routines throughout the session, which helps them feel secure. They settle quickly into the group and separate confidently and with ease from their carers.

Children make very secure relationships with familiar adults and each other and play exceptionally well together. They confidently initiate conversations, make up their own games and talk about events outside of the group. They share well and talk about sharing with each other during activities. They are supported to try daily new activities and have a very wide range of interesting experiences during a typical week. Their curriculum plans for daily physical sessions both indoors and outside in the garden and they have numerous opportunities to explore music.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning for three and four year old children is outstanding. Children make excellent progress in all six areas of learning. Staff have an exceptional knowledge of the foundation stage of learning and plan a strong and effective curriculum to progress children along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Observations and assessments for children are used effectively and enable staff to plan for individual learning for all children.

Children confidently engage in an exceptional range of planned and spontaneous activities. They make good relationships easily and demonstrate very good independence skills. For example, they enjoy their self-service snack time, which develops their all round independence

as they learn to wait, share, choose, pour drinks and carry their plates to clear away after themselves. They involve themselves in discussions with their friends and can initiate and develop play activities. They use a very wide vocabulary base to communicate, which is skilfully extended by staff asking open-ended questions to make children think and develop their recall processes during all activities. For example, children can recall what they have done during an activity and the reason why they did it. Children have many opportunities to see written words, to recognise their names and to practise writing their names. They are beginning to understand how the sounds of letters link to words and that words have meaning in languages other than English. They enjoy looking at books and are encouraged to tell each other stories. They listen to stories and make excellent attempts to write and draw their own story books. They count spontaneously and they use numbers and practise counting during every day situations and play. They are beginning to understand concepts such as more than and less than because they are introduced by staff during a wide range of activities. Children competently use an excellent range of interactive equipment and computers. They can negotiate their way around the computer using the mouse and with support most children can programme the printer and print off their 'work'.

Children learn about the outside world and their community in a very positive way. They can see an excellent display of pictures and posters in their environment, many of which are in dual languages and they take part in a very wide range of activities to help them understand cultural differences. Children are enthusiastic when trying activities for themselves. For example they select from a very good range of graphics materials and creative materials to create pictures and to construct and join things together. They have a wide range of creative experiences to take part in at every session. Children are motivated and excited by the activities linked to their current intended learning. For example, following a recent outing to Coombe Park children have used the leaves they collected to make leaf print pictures, which have been used to cover a den in the domestic play area as the inside of a tree trunk. They have also made clay hedgehogs, rolled conkers in paint and made bark rubbing pictures all linked to the same theme.

Children's creativity is developed well. They use their imagination and make up their own games. For example, they enjoy going inside their tree trunk den with torches and developing their own games and imaginative skills. They make excellent use of a wide range of play materials in the garden to develop their imagination and physical skills. They learn to negotiate obstacle courses with wheeled toys and their play house shed is turned in to a variety of exiting adventures. For example, it is currently a well resourced baby clinic and children enjoy getting into the role of mum or dad taking their baby to clinic. They have numerous opportunities to paint, draw and create pictures. Staff organise an exceptional balance of staff led, staff supported and child initiated play and ensure that all children are appropriately challenged and learn at their own pace.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are treated with great respect and their individual needs are known and supported very well by staff. They attend from a variety of different backgrounds and children's individual needs are discussed with carers and parents during visits to the setting before they commence

and during home visits. Children are provided with excellent opportunities and activities to learn to appreciate and value each others' similarities and differences. For example, they freely choose from a very good range of resources, which promote cultural differences and provide positive images of disabilities. They can see an extensive range of words written in different languages and they can see pictures and posters of children with disabilities taking part in everyday play. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Children take part in many planned festival celebrations. They make masks, artefacts with clay and other materials, cards and pictures and they can see displays associated with the festival. They taste food and use utensils such as chopsticks and they take part in dances and go to watch performances associated with the celebrations in the school. Children with learning disabilities and disabilities are welcomed, valued and are extremely well supported. Children's needs are met by their individual education plans and one to one support is provided to ensure children fully integrate and have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Staff work very closely with parents and other professionals, for example attending meetings and offering support to ensure that the best care possible is given to each child.

Children learn the rules of behaving well. Very effective procedures, which focus on positive behaviour help children understand how staff expect them to behave. They demonstrate a very good understanding of sharing, which is fostered by adults focusing on children learning that 'we do this' instead of in the negative 'we don't do that'. As a result of staff's initiatives to focus on positive behaviour children talk openly with each other about sharing and will tell each other when they are unhappy that a child is not sharing. Minor disputes between children are settled very quickly. Adults help children to negotiate with each other during disputes to resolve their differences. Children are praised very effectively by staff. For example, a staff member told two children she had watched them tidy up without being asked. She congratulated them and told them how happy it made her feel and gave them each a sticker which said 'I helped.' Their self-esteem was escalated and they went away with beaming faces and proudly showed off their stickers to other children.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Exceptional written information is provided for parents to cover both care and education. For example, they receive regular newsletters and daily information on the parents notice board. They attend several informative sessions before their child commences at the setting and they have a home visit. They have copies of the pre-school prospectus, which is very detailed and also an excellent information pack regarding the foundation stage of learning, the six areas covered and information about the stepping stones. They can complete information about their child's stage of development and learning before their child commences and share with their key worker what they know about their child. They have a follow up discussion by appointment the following term to add any further information about their child's learning and development.

Parents have extensive opportunities to discuss their child's progress informally and at a series of meetings and pre-arranged appointments. They receive written assessments, including a 'treasure book' of their child's achievements during the year. Parents are encouraged to take part in their child's learning in a wide variety of ways. For example, helping at sessions, going on outings and afterwards completing activities with the children linked to themes and intended learning. They receive a folder of ideas and activities linked to the curriculum, which they can complete with their child.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for in a clean, welcoming and stimulating environment, where excellent use of space and resources enables children to experience a very wide range of play activities. They are cared for by qualified staff who demonstrate a very high commitment to training to enhance their skill and knowledge base. Children benefit as a direct result of training courses attended.

Children's care is enhanced by staffs' good organisational skills. Attention to health, safety and for example very good staffing ratios keeps children safe and secure at the setting. Most documentation is well organised and readily available and they are kept to a high standard. Children's welfare, care and learning takes priority and is supported well by staffs' implementation of the setting's policies and procedures. Overall the needs of the children who attend are met.

Leadership and management of the educational provision at the setting is outstanding. The provider leads from the front and exceptionally motivates a dedicated staff team. Staff take on various roles and responsibilities for the educational provision with enthusiasm. Excellent team work is apparent and staff demonstrate a shared vision with the owner of how they want the provision to benefit children. All staff demonstrate an outstanding commitment to training, giving up their own time if necessary and every staff member attends at least four external courses every year. Staff meet regularly and are well supported by the owner. They have an annual training and development plan discussed each year at their appraisal.

There are excellent systems in place to identify the settings strengths and weaknesses. For example, weaknesses in the educational provision are identified by all staff members at team meetings, an evaluation of the reason for the weakness takes place through discussions, for example if an activity has not met the intended learning. Staff meetings are used to keep abreast of current issues and curriculum plans are reviewed and amended. Any strengths are shared as good practise and are also shared with the school early years teacher who has strong links with the provision. Detailed planning and evaluation of the stepping stones is undertaken and a very comprehensive portfolio of the stepping stones accompanied by photographs is kept as a record of achievement for the group. Advice is sought from other professionals such as the early years development worker, partnership teacher and area special educational needs co-ordinator. During forums and external managers meetings good practise issues are discussed and shared with other professionals.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure special needs statement includes children with disabilities. This has been addressed and the policy contains all required elements.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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.

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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 outstanding.

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 that written consent is obtained from parents to seek emergency treatment and before administering medication
- ensure that records of emergency evacuations contain sufficient details.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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