

Stepping Stones Day Nursery Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	254643
Inspection date	20 June 2007
Inspector	Lynn Dent
Setting Address	Arboretum Street, Nottingham, NG1 4JA
Telephone number	0115 9101162
E-mail	jenny@steppingstonesltd.com
Registered person	Stepping Stones Day Nursery Ltd.
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 Day Nursery opened in December 2000. It operates from four rooms in a single storey building on a site next to Arboretum Nursery School. It is situated in the city centre of Nottingham. A maximum of 77 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.45 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to the secure outdoor play areas.

Stepping Stones provide an after school service and holiday care for children under eight years of age. There are currently 68 children from six weeks to under eight years on roll. Of these, 12 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area, including families living locally as well as parents who travel to work in Nottingham and the surrounding areas. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs 19 staff. All hold appropriate Early Years qualifications and four are working towards a high level qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Routine cleaning of the premises, toys and resources and effective procedures to maintain a very clean kitchen are implemented well. The staff wear disposable aprons and gloves to change children's nappies. They use separate designated aprons when serving food. These measures ensure that children are protected from germs. Clear procedures ensure that children are effectively protected from the risk of infections. For example, children do not attend the setting for 24 to 48 hours after infectious illnesses have ceased. Robust procedures for administering medication means the risks of overdose are minimised. Parents are kept fully informed of minor accidents and the treatment their child receives due to detailed record keeping. Children have a clear understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. For example, they understand the importance of using sun cream and wearing hats in hot weather. Older children can explain why it is important to eat healthily and drink water regularly. They actively participate in routines which contribute to their understanding of personal hygiene and can explain the reasons for this. Children from an early age learn to use tissues to wipe their nose. However, not all children actively do this. Therefore, this may compromise the health of others. Babies sleeping and eating routines from home are maintained due to close working partnerships with parents. Consequently, this supports children's emotional development.

Children clearly enjoy their meals. Their diet is nutritionally balanced and incorporates foods from different cultures. Consequently, they are able to develop a range of tastes. The menu is changed on a regular basis and also throughout the year to take account of seasonal changes. Children's dietary needs are detailed on their records. This information is available to staff and the cook. Consequently, these are met as children receive alternative meals when required. As babies are weaned onto solid foods they are encouraged to try different foods and staff offer milk in feeding cups to older babies to encourage their development and independence. Staff are positive role models at meal times. They eat with the children encouraging them to serve themselves and develop good table manners. Consequently, children learn valuable skills for later life. Older children have been involved in a healthy eating project. Consequently, they understand the benefits of this.

Good use is made of the limited outdoor play area. A range of equipment is available and staff take other activities outside for children to play with. The nursery also uses a park adjacent to the building to ensure children have space to run and play team games, for example, when using a parachute. Children enjoy many varied experiences both indoors and outdoors to enhance their physical development. For example, they can throw balls into basketball nets. More able children confidently throw and catch large balls. Children ride wheeled toys with skill and use climbing equipment and slides easily. They confidently use stepping stones made from trees to move across the play area showing good coordination and balance. Children use drawing and craft materials and can build with construction sets. Older children competently use cutlery and pour drinks at meal times. Therefore, they develop good hand eye coordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff have received training and have a clear understanding of the known indicators of child abuse. They have a sound understanding of the internal procedures in the event of a concern about a child in their care. However, not all staff are confident to implement the Local

Safeguarding Children Board reporting procedures in the absence of the named person. Consequently, children's welfare may not be fully safeguarded. The written child protection policy is comprehensive and reflects current professional advice. Children are protected from people who are not police checked by robust policies and procedures, which, are implemented very effectively. Children have an extensive range of developmentally-appropriate and stimulating toys and resources which are in good condition. These are cleaned weekly and stored at children's height. Consequently, these are independently and safely accessed to support children's play, development and learning. Children develop an awareness of how to keep themselves safe because staff talk to and explain to the children about how to play safely. For example, how to climb into and onto large play equipment. Children's wellbeing is maintained during outings as a result of clear procedures and detailed risk assessments undertaken prior to visits taking place.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and attractive play environment where space is organised and used effectively to enable them to play safely and move freely between activities. Consequently, children have freedom to learn about their own abilities and to take risks within the safe limits set by staff. The environment is enhanced by the effective use of displays, lights and bright colours. The successful implementation of risk assessments of the premises and activities means that children's welfare is promoted. The setting uses nationally recognised procedures for using and storing hazardous substances. Staff vigilantly check the premises each day to ensure that they remain safe for the children to use. A range of measures are in place to protect children indoors and in the outdoor play area. For example, radiators are inaccessible to children as they are installed above their height throughout the building. Safety surfaces have been installed in the outdoor play area. As a result children's safety continues to be effectively maintained when playing outdoors. There are rigorous procedures for entering and leaving the premises to ensure children do not leave unsupervised or with an unknown adult. Staff know who is on the premises at all times as the management are vigilant in keeping a record of visitors and informing staff when someone is on the premises.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are making good progress in their care learning and play due to the effective interaction from staff. The nursery atmosphere is caring and homely. As a result children are confident, have good self-esteem and are happy to leave their parents. All children enjoy their time at the nursery because staff treat them with kindness and place a high emphasis on enhancing children's personal, social and emotional development. This provides children with a sound basis and enables them to become confident learners and develop their own play and interaction. Children are very settled and staff provide good support for those who are less confident. The 'Birth to three matters' framework is successfully used to plan and deliver an extensive range of appealing activities and experiences. Consequently, these are developmentally-appropriate and meaningful to children. As a result they willingly engage in the experiences provided for them. For example, imaginative role play about hairdressers help children to develop personal skills. The staff are experienced and understand the importance of allowing children to extend the activities and to implement their own play and learning. For example, children search for toy farm animals in shredded paper. The children decide to experiment further by sprinkling the paper over themselves and others. Staff allow this to continue. As a result the children happily return to the original activity after a few minutes, playing for sustained periods of time. Development for babies is supported well. They are encouraged to crawl or walk by staff who place toys so they can independently access them. By providing appropriate equipment, for

example, baby walkers, this encourages independent walking. Regular monitoring and assessments of all children by their key worker means that developmental stages are promoted. The nursery provides a range of developmentally-appropriate activities and games for children who attend the nursery out of school hours and in the holidays.

Nursery Education

Children in the Foundation Stage are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Children show an understanding for writing and mark making. They use imaginative role play to develop this. For example, they involve adults in a telephone call to the shops to ask what they would like to buy and make lists by mark making and using some initial letters. This also shows they are relating their own experiences of life and building on what they already know. Children listen carefully at circle and story time. They show they have good listening and conversational skills as they participate in group discussions. This time is also used effectively to help children develop an understanding of the sounds within their name. Consequently, they show a good understanding of these and of the sounds in their friend's name. More able children can independently write their own name and those of their friends. Children enjoy sharing books. They can re-tell simple stories and explain what is happening in the pictures of books they do not know well.

Children know that four children are allowed to play in the water at any one time. Although this has recently been introduced to the children, they have grasped this concept well and can explain it clearly. Children can count accurately. More able children can count on from a number and can problem solve. For example, a child gives an adult four mobile telephones and knows that she needs one more to make five. However, mathematical language or concepts, for example, addition and subtraction, full and empty, light and heavy are not fully promoted during daily routines and planned activities. Consequently, some children may not fully understand these. Children understand the concept of using money to pay for items they buy at a shop during role play. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is enhanced through planned activities and free play. They plant and grow seeds and know these need to be watered regularly to make them grow. Children use computer games to enhance their learning in all areas of the curriculum. They understand how to use the computer. For example, children explain that the mouse moves the arrow around the screen. Children use everyday items to represent other items. This is seen as a child makes a balloon then a whoopee cushion by blowing up a rubber glove. The child laughs when staff sit on it and it makes a noise. Children use instruments, music, and a range of craft resources to be creative. Consequently, this is developed well and children are able to express themselves in a range of ways.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff show a clear knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage of learning. They effectively use this to plan a broad and balanced range of the learning experiences. Staff clearly understand the learning intentions of the activities provided. They are enthusiastic and actively involved in the children's play and learning. A range of methods with an emphasis on learning through play are used well. Consequently, children are eager to learn and resist distractions. Staff challenge children to think about what they are doing during routines and activities by asking good open ended questions and encouraging children to ask questions. For example, while sharing a book the children ask what crabs eat. Staff explain this to the children and suggest that they use the internet available in the nursery to find out more information. Inclusion of all children is planned and monitored. Time and resources are effectively used to enable all children to progress. Therefore, children remain engaged and stimulated to achieve their full potential. Regular monitoring and assessments of the activities ensures that the learning intentions are met. Staff regularly observe

and record children's progress. Therefore, they know the children well. This means that their achievements and the next steps in their learning are identified, enabling further progress. Children's achievements are regularly shared with parents. Consequently, they are kept well informed and become actively involved in their children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Children show a sense of awe, wonder and delight as they explore the activities provided. For example, children playing with dry pasta enjoy the noise it makes as they let it fall into a tray. They show this by laughing and excitedly jump up and down. All children are warmly welcomed into the nursery and receive good care which takes full account of their differences and individual needs. Therefore, they develop a sense of security, belonging and have equal opportunities to participate in the activities which are adapted to meet their needs. The staff take good account of children's interests and events that happen throughout the day. For example, a child becomes excited when a moth walks across the outdoor play area. She eagerly tells the staff what she sees. The staff encourage the children to watch the moth and talk about what it is. Children are positively encouraged to learn about the wider world in which they live. For example, resources promote positive images. Posters are displayed in a range of languages and also positively promote disability. Children learn a range of signs and symbols for simple words to help them express themselves and develop an understanding of how others communicate. Therefore, children learn to respect differences in others around them. The nursery staff have enabled children to develop links with a similar setting in Poland. Consequently, the older children are learning about the differences and similarities between the two settings and countries. Children with special needs receive appropriate support as the setting provides additional adult support and works closely with a range of agencies when required.

Children show good behaviour because staff provide consistent good role models for this. The effective use of developmentally appropriate discussions and distractions help children to learn how to manage unacceptable behaviour. Positive behaviour is rewarded in a range of ways which take good account of children's current understanding. For example, all children receive praise. Children aged two to three years have individual pictures of ladybirds displayed in their room with stickers attached stating what they are doing well. Older children have a chart in their drawer which they stamp with pictures. When children receive a set number of stickers or stamps they are rewarded by acknowledgment of this in their group circle time and can choose a reward. Therefore, this helps them develop responsibility for managing their own behaviour. As a result children quickly learn to share, take turns and play harmoniously together for sustained periods of time. All children are happy at the setting and babies settle well because staff welcome parents into the nursery. This enables a close working partnership and results in routines from home being effectively maintained. Parents receive information about the nursery at induction and time is taken to ensure that all relevant information about the children is recorded to underpin their care. Comprehensive written consents from parents are in place to ensure that their preferences about their children's care and involvement in activities are successfully accounted for. This means that consent is sought for children to handle animals and to meet community role models, for example, the police and fire-fighters. Regular newsletter and information for parents displayed within the nursery ensures they are kept informed about changes in routines and what the children are doing.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Consequently, this effectively contributes to the children's well-being and learning. Parents of children in the Foundation Stage of learning

receive information about this. Detailed plans and information are displayed to explain what their children are currently learning. Information is collated with parents about their child's current stage of learning. Ongoing informal discussions, the opportunity to meet with staff to discuss their child's progress and open access to records means parents can develop a clear understanding of their child's achievements and next steps for learning. Consequently, the children's learning is focused and builds on what they already know. Children's learning is extended at home because the nursery provides ideas for this. For example, children are asked to bring items from home and the nursery provides a weekly rhyme and a library style book loan service.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's welfare and safety is given high regard. Children achieve because the aims of the nursery 'to provide a secure, stimulating and caring environment that is welcoming and will encourage children to develop. A place where children can discover, achieve and express themselves through play' are met. The management and staff have successfully gained the Nottingham City Kitemark Quality Award. This shows the care, learning and play provided for the children is of a high standard and the nursery is committed to continual development. The operational plan works very well in practice. Comprehensive policies and procedures are successfully implemented and underpin the care of the children. Documentation and detailed records are kept secure and organised well. Therefore, information about the children is easily accessible and underpins their individual needs and care. The environment is organised effectively to provide space for all types of play, learning and relaxation appropriate to the developmental needs of the children. The adjacent rooms and short periods of induction before children move rooms means they quickly settle to new and different routines. Consequently, children feel secure and are happy to be there.

Robust recruitment and vetting procedures means that children are cared for by suitable staff. A comprehensive induction arms staff with the information they need to successfully implement the nursery policies and procedures. The management is committed to ensuring that staff undertake regular training. Therefore, their professional development is enhanced. As a result children are receiving good care by qualified and experienced adults. The number of adults caring for the children far exceed the required minimum ratios. Therefore, staff deployment successfully ensures children receive consistent good care and effective support in their care, learning and play. All staff work extremely well as a team and have a genuine concern and a strong commitment to the children's welfare. Consequently, a very warm, caring atmosphere is felt all around the nursery. The management and staff consistently evaluate the effectiveness of the nursery. As a result action plans are put in place to continually develop the service provided. Consequently, clear and realistic goals enable this to be achieved.

Leadership and management is good. Consequently, children's developmental progress and learning through the Foundation Stage is good. Clear monitoring and assessment procedures ensure children's next steps in learning are identified. Regular assessment of the effectiveness of activities means they are adapted, when required, to ensure the learning intentions for children are achieved. Staff take a key role in planning the 'curriculum for the Foundation Stage'. This is successfully monitored and assessed by the management whose hands on approach positively promotes the children's overall learning. Consequently, this ensures all children make good progress towards achieving their full potential in an environment where every child matters. Overall the children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the registered person agreed to review the child protection statement to ensure it complies with the booklet 'What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused', and the Local Area Child Protection Committee procedures. The registered person has taken the appropriate action to meet the recommendation. The policy has been updated to reflect relevant legislation. Therefore, children's welfare is enhanced.

At the last nursery education inspection the registered person agreed to improve the planning for outdoor play in order to fully promote children's gross motor skills and encourage them to move with confidence, imagination and safety, and develop an awareness of space; develop the opportunities for children to become aware of the different purposes of writing and encouragement for them to practise their emerging writing skills as they play; develop the partnership with parents so that they are more clearly informed about the Foundation Stage curriculum, are encouraged to share what they know about their child on an ongoing basis and have opportunities to be involved in their child's learning. The registered person has taken the appropriate action to meet the recommendations. Outdoor play is planned and available to the children daily. Opportunities to develop independent writing are planned and provided throughout the day. Parents receive written information about the 'curriculum for the Foundation Stage' and are involved in assessments and monitoring of children's achievements. Therefore, children's physical development is enhanced. They develop their writing through meaningful play experiences. Parents are kept informed about what their children are learning in the Foundation Stage and the progress they are making.

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 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 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 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):

- further develop hygiene routines for all children to enable them to fully maintain their good health
- ensure all staff fully understand how to report potential child abuse in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

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 further opportunities for children to develop an understanding of mathematical concepts and language.

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