



Stepping Stones Private Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	303706
Inspection date	07 November 2006
Inspector	Stephanie Joy Bennett
Setting Address	20 Claremount Road, Boothtown, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX3 6JQ
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Registered person	David Charles Marsden
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 opened in 1995 and operates from three main rooms within a converted building. It is situated in the Boothtown area of Halifax. A maximum of 77 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children have access to an enclosed play area.

There are currently 66 children aged from birth to under 11 years on roll. Of these, eight children receive funding for early education. The nursery currently supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs seven members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications and of these, three staff are working towards a level three qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have a sufficient awareness of developing appropriate standards of hygiene as they independently wash their hands before and after lunch and toileting, using individual face cloths and liquid soap. However, children are not encouraged to wash their hands before snack time and tables are not consistently cleaned before meals. This means that children's approach to managing their hygiene is inconsistent and the spread of infection is not fully minimised. All documentation relating to managing their daily health and well-being, such as medication records and illness procedures are well maintained. Most staff hold a valid first aid certificate, so children are handled appropriately in the event of an accident or emergency.

Children receive good nutritious meals, which are varied and promote good health. For example, they are offered sausage casserole and fruit flan. Vegetarians enjoy an alternative version to meet their dietary needs. Older children freely access drinks all day using a water cooler. They pour themselves milk, juice or water at snack time, promoting their independence and the ability to make their own decisions.

Older children develop well physically because they enjoy a large space indoors where they can climb, balance and crawl, using climbing frames, balancing beams and play tunnels. They develop good coordination skills as they play in sand or water. They have good opportunities to manipulate objects, build and construct using fine materials, such as straws and threading. Babies begin to grow and develop well. They have daily opportunities to play and kick their legs in a ball pool, crawl through a small tunnel and slide and use push-a-long toys, which help them begin to stand and walk.

Children who attend the out of school provision enjoy a good range of physical activities. For example, hide and seek, football or visiting the local park. They enjoy playground games, such as skipping and hopscotch which promotes positive attitudes to exercise and playing together. Indoors they have times to relax as they rest on a sofa and watch television.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a secure environment where appropriate regard is given to minimising risk for children indoors and out. Risk assessments are carried out on each area and notices are provided to help adults minimise risk. For example, when opening the door into the baby room, adults are reminded to check that there are no children behind the door. However, some issues have been overlooked. For example, the gate at the top of stairs can be opened by children and their feet will fit through the banisters. Children outdoors also need to walk down wooden stairs with large gaps in between them, which compromises their safety outdoors.

Children play with equipment which is reasonably well maintained and is suitable for their age and abilities. Children in all rooms access resources easily from well stored, clearly labelled areas, which develops their independence. Babies are able to enjoy a variety of experiences at

floor level, such as the sensory area and ball pool. Children are safe on outings because staff have effective procedures in place, such as reducing ratios, taking contact numbers and first aid equipment with them. Records relating to their daily safety and health are well maintained and shared effectively with parents to safeguard the children.

Children are appropriately protected because staff have sound awareness of child protection procedures. Parents are aware of their child protection policies through the procedures handbook which is easily available for them to read. Children develop an appropriate awareness of their own safety, as they learn to handle the stairs safely by holding the hand rail. They practise emergency evacuation procedures regularly, and visits from the road safety officers and fire brigade increase their awareness of keeping safe within the local community.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very secure and settled in this environment, because staff take time to get to know them and plan for their needs. Young children enjoy lots of cuddles and one to one contact with staff, as staff sit with them at floor level. Children access a wide range of experiences, such as a sensory wall and disco ball, of which when the sun shines the ball spins around and flecks of light fill the room, which children are attracted to. They learn to be skilful communicators and find a voice because staff interact well with them. Babies enjoy lots of eye contact and can sit on knees to look at books. They sing songs and musical instruments are available for them to play, developing their creativity. All children develop a good imagination, as they access well equipped role play areas where, for example, they pretend to talk on the telephone. Snack and meal times are a sociable time, where staff and children sit and can be together. Older children chat to adults and each other, and share about their home events and lives.

All children can be creative because staff organise the space so that they choose resources for themselves, such as the paint easels and chalks. Older children enjoy activities, such as leaf collage and gluing shiny materials. Babies sit in high chairs or use the floor to experiment with various textures, for example jelly, spaghetti, hand and feet printing, which helps them to explore and make connections.

Children who attend the out of school provision enjoy a relaxed environment where they can access various activities, such as a games console, action figures or art and craft activities and sand play. During the holidays, several trips to various local attractions are organised, which widens their experience of the local environment.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage. They provide a wide range of purposeful and interesting experiences, which cover all areas of learning well and increase the children's interest in learning.

Children become confident because staff focus on developing their personal, social and emotional skills when they first enter the group. Staff allow children to learn and develop through daily routines, and by becoming familiar with the areas of provision. They are confident to help children make and correct their own mistakes in a secure setting. This promotes a fun and family atmosphere where children's self-esteem is well developed. They listen and concentrate well during circle or story time and grow confident to speak and answer questions in groups. Older children are given opportunities to help adults and take part in circle time, as they hold up colour cards to the other children, which boosts their self-esteem. Children develop good independence skills, as they help tidy up and set the table for dinner. They make strong attachments to each other, for example, calling each other 'best friends' when they sit together at lunch time.

Children progress very well in communication, language and literacy and maths development. They are competent at recognising their names on trays, pegs and placemats. They develop a strong interest in reading. Books are freely available and children can follow audio tapes and pictures of their favourite stories. However, some planned activities, such as writing over letters and numbers are structured and occasionally restrict children's abilities to learn through play and initiate their own ideas. Staff use daily routines and planned activities to help children to count and recognise numerals. For example, they make their own height charts and are able to talk about how tall they are and which number they reach in height.

Children develop good creative skills, as they independently choose a variety of resources, to glue, paint or cut with. They develop very good concepts of colour, as they talk about the colour bands they wear, so they know whose key worker group they belong to. Children use their imagination well, for example, in the home corner where they pretend they are having tea. They develop a good sense of time and place, such as when they talk about their pets at home, while they help clean out the fish tank and feed the fish. They have a good awareness of the natural world around them. For example, when children empty a bag of leaves, acorns and conkers, they sort through them, naming them and telling adults where they were found. Children frequently build and construct using various objects, bricks and junk materials and observe changes as they occur. For example, one child joins straws together to make three umbrellas, he then spins them around and observes that 'they're all blue now', as the colours blend into one. Children's skills for using information and technology equipment to support their learning are developing well. They daily access a computer and use electronic equipment, such as tape players to play music and listen to stories. Children learn of the world around them as they go for local walks and visits to local attractions, such as the pet shops. Visits from the local dentist and fire station increase their knowledge of local community and their health and bodily awareness.

Children begin to negotiate and manage their own space well, as they carefully manoeuvre golf sticks and balls around the room and walk along low beams to balance. A large climbing frame is available indoors to develop their climbing skills. Cutting with scissors, threading and using malleable materials effectively develop their fine physical skills. However, there are not enough challenges offered for older children to extend their large physical development outdoors, as they climb on frames which are designed for young children and there is a limited range of large equipment available. This restricts opportunities for them to use and transport larger objects.

Assessments of children's progress towards the early learning goals are comprehensive, very detailed and cover the six areas of learning well. Children are assessed clearly against the stepping stones, which are then transferred into profiles and shared with parents. Their individual needs are effectively planned for, because staff evaluate each child's progress and use this to inform future planning. This means that older and more able children continue to be challenged in most areas of learning, while younger children are supported in their progress along the stepping stones.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the good equal opportunities policy, which is effectively promoted throughout the setting. This means that children are highly valued and included. They are made to feel welcome, through photographs of themselves, pictures, their own name cards and placemats. Older children are given more responsibility which increases their self-esteem and independence, such as helping in circle time and setting the tables for lunch.

Children play with resources which promote our diverse society in a positive way, such as dolls, books and dressing up clothes. Activities effectively promote our multi-cultural society, such as Divali and making 'chow mien' plates for Chinese New Year, which help them to develop a good awareness of cultures and beliefs other than their own.

Children behave very well and good behaviour is positively encouraged through reward schemes, particularly in the pre-school room. Consistent reinforcement of positive boundaries mean that older pre-school children become good role models and show younger children how to behave. Those who attend the after school club generally behave well and are handled appropriately by staff. However, they occasionally become boisterous, such as while they are waiting for a long period for tea to arrive or to go outdoors. All children are confident to express themselves in a variety of ways. For example, they practise music and movement during a planned physical session each week and make pictures of different faces, describing whether they are happy, sad or angry. Therefore, children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents learn of the children's activities through topic boards and daily diaries, which younger children take home each day. This promotes good communication in care and learning. Parents of older children are effectively informed about the provision for the Foundation Stage. Informative literature is available and the planning is displayed on the notice boards. A regular newsletter highlights the theme, but there are few suggestions made on how children's learning can be continued at home, through simple and practical activities. This means that a shared learning approach is not consistently promoted to further increase children's opportunities for development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The children feel settled and relaxed in this well-organised environment, so that that they grow in confidence to initiate and extend their own learning. The registered person ensures that

appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with the children. Most are very well deployed, each knowing their roles and responsibilities, so that the children's daily routines are well-organised and their needs are met. However, one member of staff works in the out of school room with less than eight children. Although ratios are maintained and nearby colleagues are on hand to help, this poses organisational issues. For example, children have to wait until all have arrived from different schools and have had their tea, before they can all play outdoors. This means that some children become restless, resulting in boisterous behaviour. Records, policies and procedures relating to the children's daily welfare are very well maintained, and shared with parents effectively. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management of the provision is good. The leader takes great care to ensure that staff providing the Foundation Stage have a secure knowledge and understanding of effective planning and assessment of children, so they make good progress towards the early learning goals. Good regard is given to evaluating the provision's strengths and weaknesses and the team recognises these well, devising actions plans and filling in regular self-evaluation forms, to ensure that improvement continues. Staff seek advice, support and additional training from the local authority. Regular appraisals are carried out to identify individual training needs effectively and allow for staff development. All of this contributes to continued improvement of the care and provision of education for children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to update procedures, such as induction, risk assessment, child protection, fire and complaints procedures. They were also asked to provide smoke alarms and resources which promote anti-discriminatory practice in a positive manner.

Most procedures are now in place and fully maintained. However, although a risk assessment is carried out, some areas, such as the outdoor play stairs and the stairs and gate leading to the pre-school room are not fully identified for hazards, which compromises children's safety. Children now play with a range of resources and books which promote anti-discriminatory practice and increase their awareness of our diverse society.

Complaints since the last inspection

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. 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.

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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):

- improve hygiene practices during daily routines, so that children learn the importance of good hygiene and the spread of infection is effectively prevented
- carry out a risk assessment in relation to the stairs indoors and the access to outdoor play, to ensure that all risks to children are minimised
- improve staff deployment in relation to the out of school club, so that children's routine is more effectively organised.

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):

- improve provision for outdoor play, so that older children's physical skills are further challenged and that all children play with a wide range of equipment which promotes learning in all areas (also in care)
- develop a shared learning approach with parents by setting small, simple tasks for children to do at home

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